United Nations S/PV.7637

Security Council

Seventy-first year

7637th meeting

Monday, 29 February 2016, 3.30 p.m.
New York

Provisional

President:	Mr. Ramírez Carreño	(Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of))
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Zhao Yong
	Egypt	Mr. Mahmoud
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mrs. Schwalger
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. Gasso Matoses
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Mr. Klein
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

Accessible document Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2016/99)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Serbia to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. Tanin, who is joining the meeting via video-teleconference from Pristina.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Vlora Çitaku to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/2016/99, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

I now give the floor to Mr. Tanin.

Mr. Tanin: Today is the Security Council's first meeting on Kosovo in 2016. It is taking place at a moment of significant developments, not least of which is the fractious, but successful, election of a new President on Friday. This is a year in which Kosovo will face countless complex challenges. Accordingly, today I will take time to assess key developments emerging from 2015 and, most important, to look ahead.

In recent months, the polarization of the Kosovo political landscape has reached levels where progress is being impeded despite considerable Government efforts to pursue an ambitious reform agenda. The extreme political antagonism has clearly transgressed basic democratic norms. The most obvious examples of this has been the repeated use of violence by the opposition to prevent the Kosovo Assembly, as well as other Government institutions, from conducting their work.

I have joined many of my colleagues in the international community to stress that adherence to the basic democratic rules of the game is more than simply a responsibility of all political leaders. It is also what empowers the voices and messages of all genuine political actors in the democratic process, including those of the opposition, which otherwise could be squandered and lost.

With matters having reached this point, I believe this is an opportune time for everyone to stand back and evaluate, and perhaps also to shift local and international focus away from political battles towards more fundamental issues. The intrinsic links among post-conflict development and the enforcement of the rule of law and human rights should be at the centre of a proactive and results-oriented agenda for Kosovo. Political leaders should be more outward-looking in exploring opportunities for regional cooperation — as exemplified by the Western Balkans Investment Summit in London one week ago — rather than focusing on limited political interests. With so much already invested in building stability in Kosovo and the region, continued attention to core issues and more focused deployment of resources can help make the difference between setting a course for progress or decline.

Throughout all this, it is important to acknowledge that many essential commitments made by Kosovo's political leadership have remained firm. Those include continuing to normalize relations with Belgrade through the European Union-facilitated dialogue, meeting the fiscal and financial obligations set forth by international creditors and ensuring the conditions necessary for full establishment of the special court. The additional and emerging challenges underscore the importance of working with all leaders in Pristina to ensure that those essential commitments do not waver.

Several fundamental steps were taken last year towards strengthening Kosovo's European perspective.

At the same time, they were accompanied by detailed and at times critical assessments by European bodies of the condition and efficiency of public institutions, especially the Kosovo judiciary. I refer in particular to the European Commission's Kosovo 2015 report and to the recent report of the Council of Europe on the situation in Kosovo, among others.

Building respect for the rule of law and ensuring adequate enforcement are great challenges in many parts of the world. In Kosovo those crucial goals are not always as high on the agenda as they should be. A strong legislative framework is already in place, including several key laws enacted just in the past year. However, its application is inconsistent, the administration of justice is unacceptably slow and instances of political interference are common. Corruption at many levels increases the public's frustration, impairs the daily life of everyone in Kosovo by reducing economic development and opportunity and undermines faith in the political system. Steadily improving the coordination of support for the rule of law should, I believe, remain a central objective this year, and it is one in which the United Nations remains ready to play a part, within the available resources and our mandate.

At times, the security and political issues take too much attention away from Kosovo's serious economic development challenges. As the Government has acknowledged, intensive efforts are needed to create more economic growth and opportunity, which in turn would ease political tensions. Despite extensive natural and human resources, few opportunities are opening up for major investment. Unemployment is high. Education needs to be modernized and depoliticized. And harmful environmental practices that significantly affect public health should be systematically addressed. As the Secretary-General has so often stressed, the close nexus between peacebuilding and development requires coherence and complementarity with all the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in Kosovo, as well as with the broader range of multilateral and bilateral development initiatives. That will be another central focus of our efforts this year.

Kosovo's legal framework guarantees the protection of human and fundamental rights, but implementation is uneven and directly influenced by political and inter-community tensions. Although Kosovo cannot directly associate itself with international and European human-rights instruments and institutions without facilitation by the United Nations, that has never prevented it from enacting robust human-rights legislation. I welcome the Government's willingness to engage with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) on human-rights reporting to the special procedures of the Human Rights Council. I also welcome the positive working relationship we have established with the Government on policy development, including on the Kosovo human rights strategy. We and many international partners remain committed to working closely with the authorities to encourage positive trends, particularly in the full implementation of the established legislative framework. The recent agreement signed on new premises for the Kosovo Ombudsperson, in line with the Paris Principles, and the appointment of a new Chair for the Pristina delegation of the Joint Working Group on missing persons, are welcome developments.

Laws and programmes designed to uphold the rights of minority groups and to protect cultural heritage, along with the realization of property rights and women's still-limited access to property ownership, remain matters of real concern. The returns programme for displaced persons has faltered, partly due to the significant shortcomings in those areas. Without ensuring the necessary conditions for people's reintegration into social, economic and political life, even limited returns are unlikely to become more sustainable.

Cooperation between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Kosovo authorities suffered several setbacks last year. Unresolved issues related to church property and the enforcement of legal protection have strained relations. We continue to receive reports of incidents, including thefts, in households owned by Kosovo Serbs, which are causing concern. We are joining with the European Union and other partners to improve facilitated dialogue at all levels, from the central authorities to civil society.

In the next few months, Kosovo and the entire region are likely to face substantial external shocks that will test the resilience of their institutions. The vast refugee and migrant flows through the Balkans are unlikely to abate, and they constitute both a human tragedy and a political crisis. Kosovo's planning for contingencies should benefit from international resources and planning support, as well as regional cooperation. It is important to emphasize that any measures taken should not restrict the universal rights of refugees and asylum-seekers, and that our understanding of their plight as individuals should remain at the forefront of all policy considerations.

Assuring adequate institutional capacity and responses to the problems of radicalization and extremism, terrorist training and financing, and the associated trafficking in human beings and weapons is likewise becoming more pressing. The presence of groups driving radicalization and the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters are challenges that demand a close and efficient partnership between the Kosovo authorities and regional and international bodies. Kosovo's strategy and action plan on the prevention of violent extremism should benefit from wide-ranging international support commensurate with the extensive bilateral assistance already being directed to intelligence and law-enforcement bodies.

While politicians usually focus on near-term and insular priorities, regional partnerships mark the real path to progress. The Pristina-Belgrade dialogue is essential, while its ultimate success must be grounded in collaboration among all leaders across the region. Where the international community is concerned, safeguarding the considerable investment already made in Kosovo requires a proactive attitude both to the current challenges and to additional emerging ones. Political progress and institutional resilience in the region are both essential. However, they are by no means assured. Accordingly, our work in UNMIK is aimed at, and must be part of, an international, as well as a local, partnership to address problems that realistically cannot be tackled in isolation. By working with all those who recognize and embrace the aims of peace, security and prosperity, we can actively support Kosovo and the entire region in meeting the formidable challenges ahead.

I wish to conclude my remarks by expressing my deep appreciation to the members of the Council for their suppor, which is indispensable to success.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Tanin for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Dačić.

Mr. Dačić (Serbia) (*spoke in Serbian; English text provided by the delegation*): I would like to thank thank the Security Council for the attention is accords the question of Kosovo and Metohija via a regular exchange of views on the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the Security Council meeting convened every three months. The message that we send from here to all sides involved is exceptionally important. The force of that message is understood by all political actors and, even more important, by all communities in Kosovo and Metohija.

Notwithstanding the many challenges, UNMIK's role in the process of coordinating the activities of all segments of the international presence, as well as in stabilizing the situation in the province, is irreplaceable. UNMIK's engagement is of paramount importance for the Republic of Serbia; the Serbian population trusts UNMIK the most, whereas, for its part, UNMIK is the guarantor of the status neutrality of the international presence in the province as provided for by resolution 1244 (1999). Very important also is the contribution of other international organizations whose missions, such as the European Union Rule of Law Mission, the Kosovo Force and the Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), carried out under the auspices of the United Nations, are constituent parts of the international civil and security presences in Kosovo and Metohija.

Serbia commends UNMIK's consistency and commitment to the realization of the priorities mandated by its mission. In view of its task of promoting security, stability and respect for human rights, I would like to emphasize that UNMIK's engagement, in its present scope and with undiminished budget capacities, is essential for the creation of conditions conducive to reaching a durable and sustainable solution for the question of Kosovo and Metohija. At the same time, it sends a message to Kosovo and Metohija Serbs and other non-Albanians who see in UNMIK a guarantor of their survival that they are not forgotten. In that sense, it is also important that we maintain the present Security Council reporting dynamic on the work of UNMIK. I expect UNMIK to continue to carry out its mandate in a status-neutral way in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999), especially in areas relevant to the survival and normal and dignified life of the Serbs and the members of other non-Albanian communities in Kosovo and Metohija.

Turning to the report (S/2016/99) before us, I would like to reiterate that, in order to present a broader picture of the situation in which the Serbian and other non-Albanian populations live in the province today, the periodic reports must reflect the life of the communities south of the Ibar River as well. Disregard for human rights and the problems encountered by minority communities all over Kosovo and Metohija make their feelings of isolation, neglect and hopelessness ever more intense. I therefore propose that the next report include a thorough review of the situation of the members of the communities south of the Ibar River.

As I have done on previous occasions, I would like to point to the importance that Serbia attaches to the quest for solutions for internally displaced persons from Kosovo and Metohija. The strategy of my country in that regard is to fully support the persons displaced from Kosovo and Metohija, whether they opt for a sustainable return or for integration in the place of displacement. Yet whatever support that Serbia may provide to potential returnees will be insufficient, short of adequate engagement by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Pristina and their acceptance, or at least toleration, by local communities, coupled with the active participation of the international community.

The answer to the question of why an ever-smaller number of people opt to return home to Kosovo and Metohija is complex: they become frustrated by administrative, security, institutional and legal barriers and decide to integrate locally not as an act of a conscious, personal choice, but rather as a consequence of a lack of genuine possibilities to return. The OSCE Mission in Kosovo report of last November is very indicative in that regard: out of 479 incidents in Kosovo and Metohija, 310 were directed at Kosovo and Metohija Serbs, 22 per cent of them returnees. According to data from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees, only 12,145 displaced Serbs and other non-Albanians returned, while just 4,000 of them realized sustainable returns. The quarterly reports of the Secretary-General are also indicative of the worrisome trend of declining returns, wherefore much more attention should be devoted to this problem, as well as to measures to overcome it. The worrisome statistical data should provide motivation and lead to intensive work to remove the obstacles that prevent and make it more difficult for the internally displaced persons to achieve sustainable returns in larger numbers in which, under resolution 1244 (1999), UNMIK also should play an exceptionally important role. Promises alone are not enough; effective measures and concrete results are needed.

I have already lost count of how many times I have drawn the attention of the members of the Council, which represents the most important body of the international community, that, year after year, we keep repeating the data that over 220,000 Serbs were expelled from their ancestral homes in Kosovo and Metohija and that only 1.9 per cent of them realized sustainable return. Does that mean that the international community has given up on the return of 220,000 Serbs? Will it legitimize the ethnic cleansing of Serbs from Kosovo and Metohija? How many more years must go by before the Serbs are able to return? Sixteen or seventeen years have already passed. Or is no one planning on their return at all? Or are they fair game indeed?

Piecemeal data on attacks on the life and property of Serbs and other non-Albanians create a somewhat fuzzy picture of a civilizationally unacceptable phenomenon: the persecution of people only because they do not belong to a majority community. Unfortunately, there are many examples. Last October, a group of Albanian youths beat four Serbian boys younger than 15 years old in the village of Donje Kusce near Gnjilane. Two of them sustained serious injuries: one was stabbed with a knife, the other was hit with a metal bar. At the beginning of December, a number of Serbian houses were shot at in repeated gun bursts, a car was set on fire and the memorial to the victims of the NATO bombing and the monument to children killed at the Bistrica River in 2003, whose killers were never found, were vandalized at Gorazdevac, municipality of Klina.

The presentation of the response of institutions, including police investigation, prosecution and the sentencing of perpetrators, would be welcome indeed. The Council will agree that the statistics on the processing of crimes and the providing of compensation for criminal offences, including murders committed against Serbs, would make for illuminating reading. Let me remind the Council that the number of killers of over 1,000 Serbs since 1999, tried and given legally valid sentences to date continues to be zero. These things, however, are the litmus test for the achievements of a society in the area of democracy and the rule of law. One question is very pertinent in this regard, namely, whether the murder of Serbs is a criminal offence or whether that, too, can go unpunished? How, then, can the Serbs believe in the rule of law if up until now no one has been prosecuted and sentenced for those murders?

In the light of what I have said here, I call again on the United Nations and representatives of the Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and Metohija to help overcome the problems that make the return of internally displaced persons to their homes more difficult. We should keep in mind that, beyond the lack of security, the absence of effective mechanisms for the restitution of usurped property is one of the most important factors that prevents or limits returns. The April 2015 report of the Secretary-General states that

> "[u]nresolved property rights remained a key impeding factor to progress in voluntary returns and intercommunity relations in Kosovo." (*S/2015/303, para. 34*)

To that end, we would draw attention to the institutional measures taken by Pristina, such as the draft law on the Kosovo agency for property comparison and verification, which contravenes the 2011 technical agreement on customs stamps and cadastre. The draft law's adoption would make it possible to legalize the unlawful seizure property and would cause irreparable damage to the Serbian community in Kosovo and Metohija. The realization and protection of property rights are one of democratic society's most important achievements and represent the vital interests of a community, as also stated in the October 2014 report of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe entitled *An Assessment of the Voluntary Returns Process in Kosovo.* It is therefore of paramount importance to draft a new law using a process in which representatives of displaced persons and the Serbian Orthodox Church would also participate.

The fragility of the situation in Kosovo and Metohija in various sectors is noted also in the European Commission 2015 report on Kosovo. The report notes, inter alia, that Kosovo's judicial system is in its early stages of development and is still prone to political interference. The attitude of the Pristina authorities and judiciary towards Mr. Oliver Ivanović — the leader of the Serbian Civic Initiative "Serbia, Democracy and Justice", about which I have spoken in the Security Council on a number of occasions — led to a verdict that can be characterized only as political, proving the existence of political interference in a convincing manner. The verdict, without foundation in justice or in law, is a far cry from contributing to the stabilization process in the province and to the building of trust in the institutions and the rule of law in Kosovo and Metohija.

The absence of the rule of law, the existence of divergent interests between the Government and opposition political structures, as well as the lack of genuine will to fulfil the conditions put before the Government in Kosovo and Metohija by the international community, will be a destabilizing factor for some time to come. A negative climate for Serbs is being created because of alleged concessions made by the Pristina side during the Brussels dialogue. There is therefore a danger that violence could spill over from Pristina into Serbian enclaves in the other parts of Kosovo and Metohija.

Kosovo and Metohija's level of religious extremism is the highest in the region. Radical Islamist structures, supported by a large number of Islamic clerics — Imams — from the official Islamic community of Kosovo and Metohija, as well as international and local Islamist organizations, is proof of a serious threat of terrorism, particularly given their associations and links with foreign terrorist fighters in Syria and Iraq who have left the region at the highest rates of any Muslim population in the Balkans.

Political radicalization and the worsening of the security situation due to the escalation of political and religious extremism threaten all residents of Kosovo and Metohija, and returnees in ethnically mixed communities are generally the most threatened. That calls for additional measures to improve the security of Serbs and members of non-majority communities who are, as stated in the report I mentioned, regular targets and victims of ethnically motivated attacks.

The presence of terrorist elements and the activities of radicalized extremists, including returnees from conflict-ridden areas in the Middle East, give rise to particular concern. The report itself speaks of arrests and indictments of a number of Kosovo and Metohija Albanians suspected of being connected with terrorist organizations, while in the reporting period graffiti making explicit reference to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant has defaced Serbian houses, the walls of Serbian Orthodox churches and road signs. Four armed Islamists were arrested in January at the portal of the Visoki Dečani Monastery, a jewel of Serbian, European and world spiritual and cultural heritage, which is on UNESCO's List of World Heritage in Danger.

The Republic of Serbia is fully committed to the dialogue being conducted between Belgrade and Pristina and facilitated by the European Union and to the implementation of agreements reached. In the circumstances in which the Serbian people of Kosovo and Metohija live, they see in the covenants entered into by the European Union under the Brussels agreement the guarantee of their survival and development. The community of Serb majority municipalities in Kosovo is intended to articulate the interests of the Serbian population and provide an institutional mechanism for collectively realizing and protecting their basic rights and contribute to a continued and more rapid normalization of relations.

In all reports of the Secretary-General, it has been asserted that a speedy establishment of the community of Serb majority municipalities is crucial for the implementation of the Brussels agreement. Yet so far the community has not been established. Instead of positive steps in that direction, a new element has been introduced contrary to the Brussels agreement, namely, the inclusion of the so-called Supreme Court of Kosovo in the process of review and de facto revision of the agreement. If the Supreme Court of Kosovo is tacitly accepted to be an institution empowered to alter a political agreement facilitated by the European Union reached at the highest level, the purpose of dialogue and the guarantee that every agreement will be implemented in the form in which it has been reached are thrown very much into question. It sends a negative message to the Serbian community, as well as to the European Union as a facilitator and to the United Nations.

I would reiterate that my country's commitment to contributing to the stabilization of the situation in the region and to the agreement I signed with Mr. Hashim Thaçi, which clearly defines the obligations of both sides, the main reason for the signing of the Brussels agreement was, in the absence of substantive progress in the realization of basic human rights for Serbs and members of other non-Albanian communities in Kosovo and Metohija, to establish a separate mechanism that will make it possible for those communities to lead a normal life. In that sense, the idea of establishing the community of Serb majority municipalities draws intrinsically on the spirit of resolution 1244 (1999) as a mechanism, the primary function of which is to protect human rights, ensure the safe and sustainable return of all refugees and displaced persons and permit them to live a normal twenty-first century life.

In conclusion, I would like to point out once again that the Republic of Serbia's national priority is to achieve a political solution for the question of Kosovo and Metohija. In order to reach such a solution, it is also necessary to achieve reconciliation. Serbia is therefore strongly committed to dialogue with the representatives of Pristina, facilitated by the European Union, within which very important agreements have been reached. My country's commitment to the process reflects its firm determination to make an active contribution to stability in the Western Balkans and the settlement of all outstanding issues by political and diplomatic means. It is exactly with that goal in mind, and despite the many challenges, that we have been constructive in the dialogue and ready to compromise, which has not often been easy. Our approach has made it possible for mutually acceptable solutions to be reached on many complex issues, from legislation to energy and telecommunications, in the interest, above all, of reconciliation and a shared future.

We expect the European Union to continue to facilitate our dialogue with Prístina. For its part, the Government of the Republic of Serbia will undoubtedly continue to be actively engaged in implementing the Brussels agreement in the interest of the peace, stability and economic prosperity of the region.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Ms. Çitaku.

Ms. Çitaku: It is an honour for me to present some of the latest developments in the Republic of Kosovo.

On 17 February, Kosovo marked its eighth anniversary as a free, independent and sovereign State. The journey that the people of Kosovo have gone through to obtain freedom was long and painful, and the price we had to pay in order to exist as a free nation under the sun was very steep.

When we were living through the terror of war, accompanied by violence and ethnic cleansing deployed by Serbia, only in 1998 did Kosovo start to make headlines in the world. Not many people still remember that we had lived through repression decades before, harshly discriminated against and with our fundamental rights violated; without schools in our language; and with our parents thrown out of their rightful jobs, just because of our being Albanian.

This happened only a few decades, ago in the heart of Europe, in silence. I am not going to even mention the 1960s and 1970s, when violations of human rights in Kosovo were not known and people were afraid to speak of them, even among ourselves.

I am remembering this because sometimes we have to step back and see where we have come from in order to see the whole picture and understand what is happening now, at a time when we all are confronted with new challenges, when no one is afraid of losing friends or loved ones, when we all condemn atrocities together, in alliance, and we want to see the perpetrators punished.

In Kosovo, we are still waiting for justice to be served. Although we in Kosovo were the victims, and although our just cause has been addressed by international justice, be it at the International Tribunal in The Hague or in the various international missions that operated in Kosovo, including the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, Kosovo institutions have established a Special Court, which will try the crimes allegedly committed in 1999.

The sitting President of Kosovo, Ms. Atifete Jahjaga, ratified the agreement signed by the Government of Kosovo and the Netherlands. With this, Kosovo has concluded all of its international obligations towards the establishment of the Special Court. We will always cooperate with international justice, as we have done in the past, because we have nothing to hide. War was not our choice.

We all know who generated the violence and atrocities in the former Yugoslavia. History cannot be rewritten, and roles cannot be shifted. Precisely because we are fully conscious of our past, our record of cooperation with international justice has always been impeccable. Every single Kosovar Albanian who has been indicted for war crimes in Kosovo since 1999, be it by international or local justice, has always surrendered voluntarily to the Tribunal. Unlike our northern neighbour, which provided shelter for those who were indicted and later used their arrest for leverage and benefits, we in Kosovo believe that cooperation with international justice is not a subject for negotiation but rather a duty — a duty and obligation not only to our past but, first and foremost, to our children and to future generations. We need to clear the fog and remove any suspicion so that they can live in their Republic, not in the midst of doubts but proud of their past.

Unfortunately, in Serbia many serious human rights violations have not been investigated and have gone unpunished. Somehow indictments for war crimes seem not to be taken seriously. Furthermore, in Serbia, when one former paramilitary official was arrested for war crimes and given a minimum sentence, there was a massive and institutional condemnation of the justice institutions. General Vladimir Lazarević, on the other hand, was sentenced by the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) for war crimes committed in Kosovo. Upon his return to Serbia last December, after serving two thirds of his 14-year sentence, he received a hero's welcome. The Minister of Justice and Minister of Defence of Serbia and a long row of State officials lined up to welcome the infamous General, who was responsible for the loss of thousands of lives. This is what I call impunity.

This is not only my opinion, as all respectable institutions, including the ICTY, have documented this. Thousands of victims have been denied their right to justice. I want to bring to the attention of the Council one particular group: women and girls who suffered the war crime of sexual violence. While Serbia is governed by a climate of impunity, time is passing, witnesses are dying, memories are fading and the perpetrators of rape must urgently be brought to justice in order to ensure justice for the victims before it is too late.

Survivors of sexual violence in Kosovo, and there are 20,000 of them, still bear the scars, both physical and psychological, of this form of torture. Many were raped in front of their families as Serbian forces came to kick us out as part of their ethnic cleansing campaign. With the systematic rape campaign unleashed in Kosovo during the war, the Serbian security forces intended to continue the war long after it ended by aiming to leave us fragile.

Yet there has been no trial for the perpetrators of rape, not at The Hague, not even in Kosovo, even though Kosovo was administered by the United Nations. Even today, the survivors of war rape in Kosovo are not included in United Nations resolutions or reports. On behalf of them, I seek justice. We need to see the perpetrators behind bars, and we need to collectively and globally do more, so that the victims of sexual violence in conflict throughout the world feel supported and not alone.

The elderly make up another very vulnerable group that is still suffering the consequences of the war. There were 88,900 Kosovar Albanians who were left without their rightful access to their contributions on their pension fund. All their hard work, savings and contributions made in the most honest way were taken away from them and never returned. The European Court of Human Rights handed down a decision stating that Serbia violated local and international law by the violent interruption of pension paymentss to Kosovo-Albanian citizens, which should be not only returned retroactively, but also with damages suffered during the years. This is an issue that needs to be addressed, and we believe the dialogue in Brussels is the platform for it.

Every time we come to debate in this Chamber, Serbia tries to portray a very dark picture regarding the living conditions of the Serbian community in Kosovo. I can only reassure the Council that minorities in Kosovo cherish a wide range of extensive rights, which are enshrined in our Constitution. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for Serbia itself, where even the Council of Europe called on it to step up the efforts with regard to the effective and consistent implementation of legislation on the protection of minorities and the non-discriminatory treatment of national minorities throughout Serbia, especially with regard to education and the use of native languages. The Albanian community in Preševo, Medveđa and Bujanoc are a testimony to the problems that exist.

Minorities in Kosovo are fully represented, and we are doing our best to support them. We have in place the Development Fund for Northern Kosovo, which derives its revenues from taxes collected at the Jarinje and Tabavije border crossing points. The revenues collected so far amount to €8.3 million and are used to support the socioeconomic development of the northern municipalities. The board of the Fund is managed by our Minister of Finance and a Serbian representative and is chaired by the European Union Special Representative. In the current month alone, €1.9 million was awarded to Kosovo's northern municipalities. So far, €6.6 million has been awarded from the Development Fund to the four northern Kosovo municipalities. For the full integration of all municipalities in the justice system, 39 agreements, totalling €1 million, were signed for capital investments from our Ministry of Local Government and four municipalities. Another 89 agreements for capital investments, amounting to €14.5 million, were signed between different ministries of the Government and the northern municipalities.

With regard to the returnees, 121 houses were rebuilt in 2015 under just one programme, co-funded by the European Union and the Government of Kosovo. Our Government has also continued to provide financial support to initiatives for return and reintegration. The construction of houses is a clear example of the ongoing efforts of our Government to accommodate returnees and their reintegration. One hundred and thirty-four returnee families benefit from support in different regions. Every citizen of Kosovo is free to return, but the figures put forward often project an unrealistic starting point. It is true that more Serbs lived in Kosovo before 1999, but we also need to remember that many of them were part of the military and police establishment that came from Serbia as part of the repressive apparatus in Kosovo. Obviously, they will not come back.

The picture is very different from the one Serbia insists on painting here every three months by reading from police reports and by trying to give a political and ethnic dimension to every single stone thrown in Kosovo. Let me be honest: while progress has been made and the normalization of relations in the region has gained new momentum, especially with the inter-State dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, reconciliation among people will be possible only after there is recognition by Serbia for the crimes committed and after a sincere and official apology is made. Serbian human rights champions Sonja Biserko and Nataša Kandić have continuously raised their voices and advocated for that. We need that acknowledgement from Serbia, because everyone in the region needs to move forward and address the challenging issues of the present.

The Constitutional Court in Kosovo gave very clear guidelines as to how the association of the Serbian municipalities should be established. Legitimate concerns were raised about it, but now the Government has a clear road map in its hands on how to establish the association, without hurting the functionality of our State. We will not allow the reproduction of the dangerous models we have witnessed in the region, where one entity hinders the progress and road forward for the entire community and countries.

We in Kosovo believe that dialogue is important, but good faith and the implementation of agreements, in earnest and without ambiguity, is everything. Engaging in dialogue with the cynical objective of obtaining favours and compliments from Brussels is counterproductive, if we all do not talk in earnest with our public about what dialogue is about. The dialogue is not about reinstating Serbia in Kosovo. The dialogue is not about rewriting history. Kosovo is a free, independent and sovereign State. That will not change.

What must change is Serbia's attitude towards us. The dialogue in Brussels is a good first step. Dialogue is about making sure that history does not repeat itself. Dialogue is about building trust and bridges of cooperation for the common good and common benefits. Dialogue is about making sure that what we leave behind for future generations is not characterized by tension, ambiguity and mistrust. Dialogue is about making sure that we treat each other with dignity and as equals, as two States that are, and will be, neighbours — and, hopefully, members of the European Union. That is the dialogue Kosovo wants. That is the dialogue we want to engage in.

The political climate in Kosovo is fierce and often tense. We are still a very young democracy, and we are still learning. The Parliament of Kosovo elected a new President, Mr. Hashim Thaçi, with 71 votes. There were protests and there were celebrations. While our political leaders have their obvious disagreements, let no one have any doubt as to our collective aspiration to Euro-Atlantic integration and values. The 21 January ratification of our Stabilization and Association Agreement by the European Parliament cemented that path. Another milestone for Kosovo was its selection by the Millennium Challenge Corporation as a country eligible for assistance. Kosovo had to work hard to improve its performance in many indicators, and much more remains to be done.

On behalf of the Government of Kosovo, I want to state the following. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is now only a reporting mission, based on the report of the Secretary-General that was approved by the Security Council in 2008 (S/2008/692). The United Nations may decide to keep an expensive mission in Kosovo that is costing the Organization a quarter of a billion dollars a year, at a time when those resources could be used elsewhere, but there is no doubt that the wheel of history cannot be turned back. While we are thankful for the role played by UNMIK in the immediate aftermath of the war, this is 2016 — not 1999.

As we look ahead, there is no doubt that many challenges remain, and that a lot more needs to be done to fulfil the rightful expectations of all Kosovar citizens. They have the absolute right to demand more from our Government and institutions, as they give us reasons to be proud every day. Just last night, two Kosovar teenage boys walked the red carpet in Los Angeles as the entire nation stayed awake and united to celebrate our first Oscar nomination. Although we did not win the Oscar this time, the movie won millions of hearts, telling the story of Kosovo better than any Ambassador ever could, and reminding us of the steep price we had to pay for our freedom. We were reminded that no dream is too big and no hope too high. While we prepare for our first appearance in the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, where our flag will be raised for the first time, our nation is uniting again to support our golden champion. Majlinda Kelmendi.

These are the new heroes of Kosovo — artists and athletes who inspire the nation. It is a generation that is fighting isolation by providing examples for all of us through their hard work and dedication. While Majlinda and our athletes prepare for the Olympics, we should be working even harder to enable Kosovo's participation and membership in all international organizations. Our young people cannot and should not remain hostage. Kosovo is here to stay — forever. And we will do our outmost to have our flag and our voice raised in all international organizations, including the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, in this meeting, and we share the assessments he has made here today.

We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, Mr. Zahir Tanin, for his briefing on the situation of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which paints a worrisome picture of the situation in the province. That is no surprise. No matter how convincing Ms. Vlora Çitaku's interesting interpretation of history and contemporary realities may be, the situation in Kosovo is characterized by ongoing crisis and disorder. Clashes with the opposition regularly spill out into the street and mass confrontations erupt against the police. We hope that the international presence will manage to keep the situation under control.

The situation of the Kosovar Serbs remains very serious. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/99) notes instances of physical violence used against them, including the stoning of a bus with internally displaced persons and gunfire against Serbian homes. After UNESCO rejected Kosovo's application for membership, further flagrant evidence was received of threats against Orthodox holy sites in Kosovo. In January, participants in anti-Government demonstrations in Pristina desecrated the unfinished basilica of the Church of Christ the Saviour in that city without intervention by the Kosovar police.

The main channel for communication between Belgrade and Pristina is the dialogue mediated by the European Union (EU). Despite the important agreements reached in August 2015, there has been little real progress in that area. First of all, for the time being the key idea of creating an association of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo exists only on paper. That project was intended to contribute to the improvement of inter-ethnic relations in the province by granting genuine rights to the Serbian community. The parties agreed to that in April 2013 — almost three years ago.

The situation is hardly satisfactory, and the reason for that is simple. It is due to the continuing neglect by the Kosovar side of its commitments, and to attempts to unilaterally revise its commitments under the pretext of the rulings of the so-called Constitutional Court of Kosovo. European Union mediators remain silent and appear to lack the strength — or possibly the will — to force Pristina to play by the rules. Nor has their been much headway after the latest round of high-level dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina on 26 January. It appears that the meeting was a simple observation of formalities.

There is a major situation around which dialogue has been taking place. As we know, in December 2015 membership discussions were launched between Serbia and the European Union under chapter 35, "Other matters", in which the issues of Kosovo are to be addressed. The Brussels negotiating platform has a number of provisions that are cause for serious concern for the Serbian side. It is difficult not to shake the impression that the majority of the EU, which has been seeking to legitimize Kosovo statehood, is trying to push Belgrade to surrender its positions one step at a time and to blackmail it with the suspension of its membership in the European Union. How else can we interpret the demand to stop Belgrade's financing of Serbian municipalities or the forcing of Serbs to adopt Kosovar insignia? How can we interpret the sending of statements concerning pension payments by Serbia to Kosovar agencies, or the right for citizens of third countries to enter Serbia? On what basis are these demands being made? Resolution 1244 (1999), which remains the framework for the peace settlement, does not mention any of that. The EU approach to mediation raises, at the very least, serious questions about its impartiality.

Steady progress in repairing the legacy of the conflict, including investigating the crimes of the Kosovo Liberation Army, without which it will be impossible to achieve inter-ethnic reconciliation. The readiness of the Netherlands to host the main infrastructure of the specialist court is a step forward. At the same time, more than five years have passed since Dick Marty, Deputy of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, submitted a report that launched real work in that area. The time for the international community to at least partially atone for its moral responsibility to the victims it was unable to protect is slowly passing. Unfortunately, we see that the launching of the tribunal mechanism is being delayed due to the domestic situation in Kosovo, where the idea is causing acute protest, especially from the opposition. We hope that this year there will be progress on the matter. Crimes need to be investigated, and criminals, no matter what position they currently occupy, need to be punished.

At the same time, against the backdrop of the ongoing lack of justice in relation to the fighters of the Kosovo Liberation Army, we are puzzled by the guilty verdict handed down by the Court of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo against the Kosovo Serb leader Oliver Ivanović, who received the severe punishment of nine years of prison. Ivanović was found guilty of killing Albanians, based on flimsy arguments and without concrete testimony that he personally took part or ordered those killings. We hope that within the framework of the upcoming appeals process, the international judges will rectify what has emerged as a politicized verdict.

On more than one occasion, we have drawn attention to the danger of disregarding the fact that the lack of proper law and order in Kosovo leads to the use of territory by Islamic terrorist groups for recruiting and training of militants. A recent and alarming indication of that was the arrest of an armed group of Islamists near the monastery of Visoki Dečani in late January. According to several reports, the members of that group were carrying the insignia of the Islamic State. We hope that that case will be thoroughly investigated and that the channels used by the extremists to penetrate Kosovo and acquire supplies will be shut down. It is still incomprehensible why the international institutions lack any information concerning the circumstances surrounding the Kumanovo incident, involving incursions by a group of militants from Kosovo in Macedonia in May 2015.

In conclusion, we wish to confirm that the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo remains a key element of the international presence and control over the situation, making it possible to maintain relative stability in the province. In such conditions, we believe it extremely important to ensure that the Mission's human and financial resources remain unchanged. Resolution 1244 (1999) remains fully in force as the international legal basis for a settlement in Kosovo. We consider Pristina's ongoing attempts to infiltrate international organizations to be unacceptable, especially in the light of how the modalities of Kosovo's participation in supranational structures are defined in the First Agreement on Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations of 2013 between Belgrade and Pristina.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): We thank Special Representative Zahir Tanin for his briefing on the report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/99) on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We welcome the participation of Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, at this briefing. We equally welcome Ambassador Vlora Çitaku.

The overall security situation in Kosovo remains stable in general, despite outbreaks of violence during political protests. We underline the fundamental role played by the United Nations through UNMIK in promoting security, stability and respect for human rights, as well as its cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), and its engagement with Pristina and Belgrade. We will focus our intervention on three main issues.

First, we will focus on key political developments. We highlight Belgrade and Pristina's commitment to continuing the high-level dialogue facilitated by the European Union and the progress achieved in the process of European integration with the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union, which has been ratified by the Assembly of Kosovo. We also welcome the progress achieved in the integration into Kosovo of institutions of former Serbian civil protection personnel. Another positive note is the initiatives taken by business leaders within the chambers of commerce in Belgrade and Pristina, aimed at strengthening cooperation among business communities.

However, despite those positive developments, we acknowledge how disturbing the Special Representative's briefing is with regard to the polarization of Kosovo's political landscape, which has reached unacceptable levels, while the extremes of political antagonism have clearly transgressed basic democratic norms. Moreover, also of great concern are the rejection by the opposition of the integration of the association of Serb-majority municipalities into Kosovo, the opposition to the agreement on territorial delineation signed with Montenegro, and the opposition's continued use of violence and inflammatory rhetoric, which is undermining the functioning of the Assembly of Kosovo.

Secondly, with regard to human rights, we welcome the appointment of a Joint Working Group by Belgrade and Pristina on the persons unaccounted for in connection with events in Kosovo, while stressing the right of return for those Serbians, who were forced to leave their ancestral lands. We appreciate the Sixteen Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign, held in Kosovo at the end of last year, aimed at raising awareness of gender-based violence and advocating for improved institutional responses. UN Women further supported the implementation of the the plan of action of the Kosovo Council on the survivors of sexual violence, aimed at ensuring their access to justice and providing joint training with EULEX on sexual violence for investigators, judges and prosecutors.

Thirdly, we commend UNMIK's maintaining technical cooperation with rule of law-related institutions. UNMIK's continued facilitation of communication between the Kosovo authorities, INTERPOL and its member States has also been facilitating requests for mutual legal assistance from States that do not recognize Kosovo. We value UNMIK's role in facilitating dialogue between communities and officials and monitoring relations among them, as well as the maintenance of technical cooperation with the relevant institutions and international organizations.

Finally, we want to reiterate our position that resolution 1244 (1999) continues to be the applicable legal framework for a comprehensive solution to the Kosovo issue, through dialogue and negotiations, based on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the framework of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Mr. Bermudez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Zahir Tanin, for having introduced the latest quarterly report (S/2016/99). I also thank the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia and Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

Uruguay supports the role played by UNMIK in promoting security, stability and respect for human rights. It also values the cooperation and contribution of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Kosovo Force and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo on the ground. Resolution 1244 (1999) remains the internationally accepted legal basis to resolve the situation in Kosovo, including full and strict respect for the principle of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Serbia. In that regard and as was demonstrated in the framework of UNESCO, Uruguay has maintained its position of not recognizing Kosovo, thereby highlighting the principle of the territorial integrity of States as an imperative norm of international law. That principle constitutes a central element of peaceful coexistence and cooperation among the members of the international community.

Although the security situation has been qualified as stable, we are concerned by the ongoing disturbances in the functioning of the Assembly of Kosovo, owing to the opposition parties' use of violence. It is critical that such differences be settled through dialogue, rather than by resorting to violence and undermining democracy. Furthermore, Uruguay welcomes the agreements approved on 25 August 2015 in the framework of dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, facilitated by the European Union, and in particular the establishment of the association of Serb-majority municipalities. We appreciate the fact that the Government of the Netherlands has agreed to host the specialist court. We hope that the court will be able to begin its work as soon as possible so as to advance the enforcement of justice and accountability.

Regarding human rights, we are concerned about the fact that the UNMIK Human Rights Advisory Panel has reported 31 incidences of violations, including violations of the right to life, of the prohibition of torture, inhumane or degrading treatment, as well as the right to social security and an adequate standard of living. We note that since the previous report (S/2015/833), no progress has been made with regard to the recommendations on the payment of compensation. In that regard, and in conclusion, we would like to reiterate our belief in the importance of ensuring that UNMIK implements the recommendations of the Human Rights Advisory Panel, particularly regarding the issue of enforced disappearances, abductions or violations of civilians, whatever their ethnic origins, for in such incidents there can be no justification for making any kind of distinctions.

Mr. Zhao Yong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank Mr. Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing on the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). China welcomes the statement of Mr. Ivica Dačić, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and his presence at today's meeting. I have also listened attentively to the remarks of Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

China respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia, and we understand Serbia's legitimate concerns regarding the question of Kosovo. Resolution 1244 (1999) is the principal legal basis for resolving that question, and it is vital that in doing so we adhere to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and engage in dialogue and negotiations within the framework of the relevant Security Council resolutions, in order to reach an appropriate settlement that is acceptable to all the parties. We appreciate Serbia's positive efforts in the search for a political solution to this issue, and welcome the significant consensus that has been reached in the high-level dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina on mutual recognition of academic credentials and personnel integration. China supports both parties in their efforts to continue their pragmatic and constructive dialogue, implement the agreements that have been reached and seek a lasting solution acceptable to both, so as to safeguard peace and stability in the Balkans and, for that matter, in Europe as a whole.

The recent security situation has remained generally stable, but Kosovo is still dealing with complexities and uncertainties in its efforts to achieve social development. The parties concerned should work to effectively protect the legitimate rights of all of Kosovo's ethnic groups, actively promote national reconciliation and avoid acts that might complicate or escalate the situation. China appreciates the work being done by UNMIK under Special Representative Tanin. We support its continued efforts to carry out the Security Council's mandate, and we hope that the international presence in Kosovo, including UNMIK, the European Rule of Law Mission and the Kosovo Force, will improve their coordination with a view to playing a positive and constructive role in achieving an appropriate settlement of the Kosovo issue.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his very informative briefing on the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). I would also like to welcome Mr. Ivica Dačić, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Ms. Vlora Çitaku, and to thank them for their statements.

Egypt has been following political developments in Kosovo closely and urges all the parties concerned to shoulder their responsibilities, to demonstrate wisdom and restraint and conduct a constructive and transparent political dialogue aimed at reducing tensions, mitigate and resolve the crisis and avoid moves that could lead to confrontations with the potential to undermine the stability of the entire region. We warn the various parties in Kosovo against escalations and ratcheting up tensions, which could have an impact on the agreements that have been made with the Republic of Serbia.

Egypt supports every effort aimed at reaching a solution that responds to all the issues under discussion between Belgrade and Pristina, through dialogue and serious negotiations based on good faith and mutual respect and on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 1244 (1999), as well as the agreements concluded between the parties in April 2013 and August 2015. We emphasize that all the parties should work to achieve a genuinely constructive atmosphere in order to restart the political dialogue, facilitated by the European Union, whose efforts culminated in the August 2015 agreement. In our view, the agreement must be implemented if stability is to be achieved through a plan of action. All the provisions of the package, with its four agreements, should be implemented in full, without exceptions, in order to avoid the possibility that the agreement could become a focus of discord. Every effort should be made to arrive at a definitive settlement that can help bring prosperity to the peoples of the region.

The positive developments discussed in the Secretary-General's report (S/2016/99) should also form the foundation for greater progress, particularly those in the areas of communications, cooperation between the Chambers of Commerce in Belgrade and Pristina and the reintegration of former Serbian civil protection personnel into Kosovo institutions, as well as the interchanges between the mayors of North and South Mitrovica. We commend the Government of the Netherlands for hosting the specialist court for prosecuting war crimes committed during the conflict. We hope the court will be able to establish the principles of the rule of law, of judicial accountability and, based on that, of reconciliation generally. We wish it every success.

We also hope to see progress on the voluntary returns of displaced persons to Kosovo, the protection of cultural and religious heritage sites, and strengthened efforts to achieve reconciliation and equality, non-discrimination among all the parties concerned, the protection of minority rights and the rule of law, while dealing with the challenges of migration and the possible spread of extremism and terrorism.

Lastly, Egypt supports the work of UNMIK and the Special Representative, as well as of all the regional and inter-regional organizations, and the cooperation and coordination between UNMIK, the European Union Rule of Law Mission and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe aimed at implementing resolution 1244 (1999).

Mr. Hickey (United Kingdom): I am grateful to Special Representative Tanin for his briefing and I welcome First Deputy Prime Minister Dačić and Ambassador Çitaku back to the Security Council.

As this is the first Council meeting on Kosovo this year, I would like to begin by looking forward to what 2016 holds in store. It will be a year of firsts: Kosovo's first Olympic games, its first film nomination at the Oscars — I am sorry that Kosovo did not win — and, perhaps more importantly still, its first contractual relationship with the European Union in the form of the Stabilization and Association Agreement — all this for country that only celebrated its eighth year of independence earlier this month. But if Kosovo is to fulfil the promise of 2016, the start of the year also shows us that there are significant steps still ahead. I want to focus on three of these today.

First, like others in this Chamber, the United Kingdom shares the Secretary-General's concern over continued violence and the use of inflammatory rhetoric. Everyone has the right to protest peacefully, but disrupting the work of the Assembly and bringing violence to the streets of Pristina serves no purpose. It only damages Kosovo's development, its image and its people.

Last Friday saw an important moment for Kosovo when its Assembly elected Deputy Prime Minister Thaçi as Kosovo's next president. But it also saw further deeply worrying scenes of violence inside and outside the Assembly, which we condemn. Dialogue, not disruption, is the only way forward. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the United Kingdom's fullest support for President Jahjaga's mediation efforts to resolve the political crisis. As a long-standing and close friend of Kosovo, the United Kingdom will offer our support Kosovo's new President to continue these important efforts. It is of course for Kosovo's political leaders to reach a solution, not for the international community. Every politician in Kosovo must take responsibility for his or her own actions and for the impact of those actions on Kosovo and its people.

My second point relates to the signature and ratification of the Stabilization and Association Agreement, which is a clear milestone in Kosovo's European journey. It was fitting recognition of Kosovo's progress and achievements over the past years. Kosovo now needs to capitalize on this progress. So we regret the delays in the implementation of the agreements reached between Kosovo and Serbia. I encourage both sides to focus on delivering on promises, to concentrate on implementation of agreements reached and to continue to demonstrate political courage and leadership.

We have seen the results of such leadership during the latest reporting period. A successful application to the International Telecommunication Union and a renewed commitment from Kosovo's Prime Minister on the association of Serb-majority municipalities and, as the Secretary-General's report highlights, there has been welcome progress on the integration of former Serbian civil protection personnel into Kosovo's institutions (S/2016/99).

That leads into my third point. To really seize the potential of 2016, Kosovo needs to continue such cooperation at all levels of society, including politics and business. There have been some great examples already this year benefiting all communities, continuing cooperation between mayors of Mitrovica North and Mitrovica South, and in the links being forged between business leaders in the Pristina and Belgrade chambers of commerce. The international community should play its part and help. The United Kingdom helped to fund the business forum convened by the two chambers of commerce in December. The success of that event shows the progress can be made in areas of mutual benefit without mediation if there is a will to do so.

Serious underlying challenges remain, not least in the rule of law, corruption and, of course, in the political crisis. Kosovo's leaders must take responsibility for addressing these challenges in the interests of all Kosovo citizens. That said, eight years after independence, the overall trend is clearly positive and the progress is undeniable. In the light of that, it is the United Kingdom's long-standing view that we should reduce the frequency of these Council meetings in order to reflect this progress.

Yes, challenges remain, but the reality on the ground does not warrant this level of Council attention, especially when we have so many other far graver challenges confronting the Council. It long past time to acknowledge that it is the European Union and not the Security Council that will bring momentum to further progress. Our efforts must therefore focus on supporting dialogue in Brussels and on the normalization of relations, not on these briefings here in New York.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): I too thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the comprehensive briefing on the situation he gave us from Pristina. I also thank the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and the Ambassador of Kosovo, Ms. Vlora Çitaku, for their statements to the Security Council.

I would like to address three points: our support for the continuation of dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, conducted under the auspices of the European Union; our firm condemnation of the violent methods of some opposition parliamentarians; and our ongoing commitment to the strengthening of the rule of law in Kosovo.

France welcomes the continuation of the political dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo under the auspices of the European Union. The recently holding of a new meeting of Serbian and Kosovar Prime Ministers in the presence of the High Representative of the European Union is a further demonstration of the commitment of Belgrade and Pristina for the process of bilateral rapprochement. Further progress has been made on this front in recent months. Integration of nearly 400 Serbian civil protection agents in various Kosovo institutions is a significant and symbolic step forward likely to strengthen the integration of the various communities in the country. Progress under way with respect to harmonizing diplomas, freedom of movement, air and rail integration will also have concrete positive impact on the everyday lives of Kosovar and Serbian citizens. We welcome this.

We expect, however, that all commitments undertaken in the framework of agreements concluded under the auspices of the European Union to be implemented without delay, including on the creation of the association of Serb-majority municipalities, which recently received a favourable opinion from the Constitutional Court of Pristina. This is a key element of the dialogue. The normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina remains generally a prerequisite for their respective progress on the path of European integration.

The political situation in Kosovo is worrying. The current disruptions of the functioning of the Assembly are absolutely unacceptable, as are violence and other acts of intimidation against politicians. France calls on those responsible for these unacceptable acts to play the game of democracy and press their claims within the framework of existing institutions and in compliance with the provisions of the Constitution.

Violence and hate rhetoric have no place in the society to which the overwhelming majority of Kosovo citizens aspires. They jeopardize the progress achieved by Kosovo patiently for over 10 years on the path of building an independent, modern and democratic State. We salute the professionalism and restraint by the Kosovo Security Forces and the mediation efforts carried out by the authorities in Pristina. We assure them once again of our full support.

The election of the new President was an important and necessary step in the proper functioning of institutions. We regret the behaviour of some members of the opposition on this occasion. Despite tensions, Kosovo authorities should seek to maintain dialogue and continue to listen to the people. Internal reforms are essential if citizens' prospects for the future are to be restored. The implementation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement should lead in this direction by creating favourable conditions for necessary changes.

Continuing wholehearted efforts to consolidate the rule of law in Kosovo must more than ever remain a priority. This pertains first and foremost to the combat against impunity. The ratification last week by Kosovo of the headquarters agreement signed with the Government of the Netherlands to set up the Kosovo Specialist Chambers in The Hague is a bold step forward that we welcome. This is a clear reflection of the determination of Kosovo to implement its commitments in the area of the rule of law. It is now important that all components of these Specialist Chambers begin operating according to the planned timetable and that the Kosovar authorities cooperate fully, so that prosecution of those responsible for the crimes denounced in the Marty report can begin.

Continued work on the question of disappeared persons is also of great importance. The signing of a cooperation agreement on the exchange of information between Kosovo and Montenegro is a step in the right direction. Relaunching the dynamic of the Serb-Kosovar joint Working Group on this topic, however, is urgent. We hope that this work will benefit from the recent appointment by Pristina of the head of its delegation, which we welcome.

The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) also has an important role to play in this area. I would be grateful to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General if he could tell us about the measures planned for the implementation of recommendations in this area by the UNMIK International Human Rights Working Group, in particular regarding the prosecution of those responsible for violations and compensation for victims.

Consolidating the rule of law also means combating radicalization in all of its forms. France welcomes the unconditional commitment of Kosovo in this area both at the local level and in the context of the international coalition against Da'esh.

Finally, I take this opportunity to reiterate our support for the European Union Rule of Law Mission, which provides daily support for the rule of law and security in Kosovo.

I should like to conclude by recalling once again, as our colleague from the United Kingdom has just done, our wish that the Council finally review its timetable for consideration of this issue given the continued progress on the ground, particularly concerning the consolidation of Kosovar institutions and the bilateral dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia.

Mrs. Schwalger (New Zealand): I, too, thank Special Representative Tanin for his briefing, and we also welcome First Deputy Prime Minister Dačić and Ambassador Çitaku to this discussion.

The European Union-facilitated dialogue continues to play an important role in normalizing relations between Belgrade and Pristina. New Zealand is pleased to see continued constructive engagement in this dialogue by the leadership of Serbia and Kosovo, including the recent high-level meeting in January. Under the auspices of this dialogue, both sides have made a number of commitments to each other, as we have heard today. While many practical steps have been taken to fulfil these agreements, important work remains. This includes the ongoing process of establishing an Association/Community of Serb majority municipalities in Kosovo. We urge both sides to engage constructively to deliver on the commitments without delay.

While the overall security situation in Kosovo has continued to be generally stable, we are concerned, as others have noted, about the recent incidents of politically motivated violence. There is no place for this in a democracy. All parties should reject the use of violence and intimidation to achieve political aims. Disagreement can be resolved only through dialogue.

In this regard, it is most unfortunate that some members of opposition parties are not setting a better example through their own actions. The physical disruption of the Kosovo Assembly, including the use of tear gas, serves only to encourage those who wish to use force to achieve political goals. Political leaders must reject all acts that undermine the proper functioning of democratic institutions. Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tanin has given us some useful food for thought today in his call to shift the focus away from political battles and towards more fundamental issues.

We continue to follow the progress towards establishing a special court to address serious allegations arising from the work of the European Union Special Investigative Task Force. In this regard, we welcome the recent agreement by the Netherlands to host this court. Like others, we hope that the court will be in a position to commence its work as soon as possible.

While there are ongoing challenges, the security situation in Kosovo is generally stable, as we have said. Sadly, the same cannot be same for many of the other pressing issues requiring the Council's time and attention. On this basis, we reiterate our view that the Council should adopt a more flexible approach as to how and when it considers this agenda item.

I should also like to take this opportunity, as I did not this morning, to thank you, Mr. President, for your stewardship of the Council this month, and we look forward to working with Angolan colleagues, who will be presiding over the Council in March.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to begin by welcoming the holding of this meeting. I wish also to thank the Special Representative, Mr. Tanin, for the clarity of his briefing. I should also like to welcome among us His Excellency Mr. Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

My delegation would like at the outset to welcome the election on 26 February by the Kosovo Assembly of Mr. Hashim Thaçi as President of the Republic of Kosovo. My delegation takes the opportunity presented by this important event to call on all political players in Kosovo to follow the rules of democracy and respect the choice that the Assembly has just made, in particular by refraining from any acts of violence, which harm individuals and public property.

I hardly need to stress the negative effects that recent events such as the ones I have referred to, especially violent demonstrations, could have on the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade. Senegal welcomes this dialogue, which is being held under the auspices of the European Union. Senegal therefore calls on both parties to continue talks at a very high level, also under the auspices of the European Union. At the same time, we wish to encourage countries and partners with influence to continue to bring it to bear in order to support the talks.

Furthermore, I am pleased to note the two agreements signed in August 2015 by the Government of Kosovo, one with Serbia, including the establishment of an association of Serb municipalities; and one with Montenegro, on territorial delineation between the two countries. The agreement on a three-stage plan between the Chambers of Commerce of Belgrade and Pristina to harmonize veterinary certificates and to overcome technical obstacles to cross-boundary commerce also deserves our approval, as does the signing by representatives of the Serbian Armed Forces and the Kosovo Force of an agreement to fully relax the air safety zone. We strongly encourage the parties to continue along this path and to strengthen dialogue in order to comprehensively manage border crossings.

These advances will not be in vain. We call on the international community to support and encourage them. The confirmation of Kosovo's eligibility to develop a Millennium Challenge Corporation compact is good news; this should translate into the mobilization of financing for development amounting to $60 million to $100 million over a five-year period. We should encourage the stakeholders to take further steps towards peacebuilding and development, especially by implementing the agreements of 25 August 2015 in the north of Kosovo.

With regard to promoting the rule of law, my delegation is pleased with the imminent start of the work of the specialist court, a Kosovar institution, which will have its headquarters in the Netherlands and will be made up of international judges responsible for trying serious crimes committed during, or immediately after, the Kosovo conflict.

In the same vein, continued cooperation and coordination efforts between parties is essential to facilitate, with the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the return of over 16,502 displaced people or, if not, seek lasting solutions for them.

Senegal also supports without reservation the joint European Union-United Nations programme aimed at building confidence among communities by protecting cultural heritage and recommends the strengthening of synergies, especially the cooperation to exchange information on resolving the situation of disappeared persons.

In conclusion, we would like to pay tribute once again to Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his wise leadership of UNMIK. We would also like to recognize the efforts of the Kosovo Force, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, all of which are working for peace and progress in Kosovo.

Mr. Klein (United States of America): I would like to welcome Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tanin back to the Council, even if only by video. I would also like to welcome Foreign Minister Dačić and Ambassador Çitaku back to the Council. The United States commends both of their Governments for their ongoing efforts to normalize relations through the European Union-led dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade.

Since 1999, the United Nations has worked hand in hand with the people of Kosovo to develop multi-ethnic democratic institutions of Government. Kosovo has established institutions that uphold the rule of law and respect human rights. The people of Kosovo have made important strides, and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has fulfilled its mandate. We strongly believe that the time is right to downsize the mission further, given the acute needs for United Nations personnel elsewhere in the world. We would welcome hearing from Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tanin at our next briefing on progress towards such downsizing.

During this reporting period, we welcomed the 27 January meeting between the Prime Ministers of Kosovo and Serbia in Brussels in the context of the European Union-facilitated dialogue to normalize relations between Pristina and Belgrade. We look to both countries to continue their work and implement their agreements, even as elections proceed in both Kosovo and Serbia. As always, we commend and fully support High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Mogherini for her personal engagement in advancing the normalization efforts.

Kosovo has also made important advances in the rule of law, in particular the establishment of the specialist court to address serious crimes alleged in the Council of Europe's 2011 Marty report. We encourage the Governments of the Netherlands and Kosovo to expedite the completion of all the necessary steps to establish the specialist court as soon as possible.

The political crisis in Kosovo, in particular the continued violent obstruction of Kosovo's Assembly, is a real cause for concern. The use of violence and tear gas inside the parliamentary chamber and on the streets of Pristina is reckless and irresponsible. It is incompatible with a modern democracy and it must end. Peaceful protest is a fundamental right in every democracy, but there is no room for violence. Kosovo's turbulent politics reflect the continued struggle that small nation is in the midst of to improve its economic situation in a transparent and fair marketplace, undergirded by the equal application of the rule of law. Dialogue is integral to overcoming the political impasses. We commend the Kosovo police for their professionalism, during the tumultuous days of large-scale protests, in handling the minority who chose a violent path.

Let me take a moment to congratulate Kosovo on the successful election of a new President in accordance with Kosovo's Constitution and laws. We praise outgoing President Jahjaga for her courageous and successful tenure as President of Kosovo. A tremendous advocate for her country and its people, President Jahjaga ably represented and advanced Kosovo's interests at home and on the world stage.

Kosovo continues to contribute to global efforts to counter terrorism and the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters. Kosovo has taken strong steps to deter violent extremism, develop effective preventive mechanisms and reduce the flow of foreign fighters from Kosovo to Syria and Iraq. We support comprehensive efforts to address those problems, such as Kosovo's national strategy to counter violent extremism and the law criminalizing foreign terrorist fighters. International law enforcement cooperation, especially against terrorism and organized crime, is critical to regional security in the Balkans and beyond. Kosovo's efforts to cooperate with its neighbours and the international law enforcement community should be welcomed, not blocked. We believe Kosovo has the technical capability and legislative framework in place to fully contribute to the international community's law enforcement efforts. It serves no one's interests, other than those of the criminals and the terrorists, to exclude Kosovo from our collective efforts to counter those common threats.

In that vein, we look forward to a day — and we hope it will be in the near future — when Kosovo will participate in all United Nations activities as a full Member, thereby contributing to development, peace and security for all nations. In the meantime, the Security Council's time is better spent elsewhere. We repeat our request that Council members agree to extend the reporting period for the Secretary-General to report on UNMIK from every three to every six months.

Mrs. Adnin (Malaysia): My delegation welcomes First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dačić and Ambassador Vlora Çitaku of Kosovo back to New York and thanks them both for their statements. We are also grateful to Special Representative Zahir Tanin for his comprehensive briefing.

Listening to the statements today, I wish to call on both sides to focus on the way forward. Priority should be given to implementing outstanding commitments in a spirit of dialogue, cooperation and constructive engagement and in securing a promising future for Kosovo. An end should be put to the negative politics of division and exclusivity, which are counter-productive and will not help to build confidence and trust between the two sides. We appreciate the assurances given by Belgrade and Pristina to remain committed to the European Union-facilitated dialogue and we hope to see an intensification of efforts towards implementing existing agreements.

I share the concerns, as elaborated by Mr. Tanin today and the Secretary-General in his latest report (S/2016/99), about the violent protests by the opposition and their supporters in Kosovo who are against the August 2015 package of agreements between Belgrade and Pristina and the territorial delineation agreement with Montenegro. We call on the relevant parties to refrain from adversarial politics in Kosovo, to cease the use of violence and inflammatory rhetoric and to resolve their differences through legitimate channels via dialogue and engagement.

The Kosovo Parliament and the rule of law must be respected. Resorting to violence and intimidation will not bring the parties any closer to their political aims. Instead, it may de-legitimize their struggle and derail the democratic progress painstakingly built by Kosovo over the years. The politics of division serve only to hold the progress towards nation-building and development ransom. Hence, we commend the commitment and efforts made by Kosovo leaders to engage in an inclusive dialogue to resolve the issues, and we applaud the competence and restraint shown by the Kosovo police in responding to the violent protests. The people of Kosovo would benefit from more traction in these areas.

Malaysia is pleased with the progress made by Kosovo during the reporting period, including the signing and subsequent ratification of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union (EU). We believe that this is a key step towards peace, stability and prosperity for Kosovo and the region. We call on the leaders of Kosovo to remain steadfast in implementating the Stabilization and Association Agreement and the socioeconomic reforms necessary for regional integration.

We also take note of the developments in the implementation of the 2014 Brussels Agreement, including the integration of former Serbian civil protection personnel in northern Kosovo into various Kosovo institutions. We hope to see more progress made in the implementation of that landmark Agreement, including the integration of the judiciary and the creation of an association of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo. The advances made by Kosovo relating to the establishment of the specialist court is yet another step in the right direction. Malaysia reiterates the need to ensure accountability and to promote closure and reconciliation for the people of Kosovo. In that regard, we commend the decision of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to host the specialist court.

On the economic front, Malaysia applauds the cooperation between the Belgrade and Pristina Chambers of Commerce during the reporting period. Such collaboration deserves our strong support, as it could open the doors to further commercial opportunities to the benefit both sides.

Malaysia is gravely concerned about the creeping influence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in the region. We commend the steps taken by the authorities in Kosovo to combat terrorist threats and to address the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters. We simply cannot afford to have terrorist groups manipulating the religious, racial and cultural divide in the region, and in Kosovo in particular, to serve their twisted and violent agenda. We therefore wish to see continued high priority accorded by the Kosovo authorities to combating that global menace. In that regard, Malaysia stands ready to support Kosovo in its fight to combat radicalization and violent extremism.

In conclusion, I join other colleagues in reaffirming support for the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, which continues to play a key role in promoting security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo. We also commend the leadership of the Special Representative and the important roles played by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Kosovo Force and the EU towards peace and stability in Kosovo.

Mr. Okamura (Japan): Let me first express my gratitude to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, Mr. Zahir Tanin, for his comprehensive and insightful briefing. I also welcome the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and Ambassador Vlora Çitaku to the Security Council.

Immediately after the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) was established in June 1999, I personally served the Mission in Pristina. My office was next to that of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Bernard Kouchner — perhaps Mr. Tanin is now using the same office in Pristina. It was a very difficult time, and we were almost at a loss in the face of numerous challenges. Moreover, at the time UNMIK did not have a clear prospective on Kosovo's future. The major concerns were, first, whether democracy would be restored in Kosovo and, second, whether reconciliation among the Kosovar people could be achieved.

In October 2000, after many challenges had been overcome, the first local election in Kosovo was conducted with the assistance of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. I was so encouraged to see people waiting over half a day in the rain — due to the poor organization of the election — to cast their votes. I was very much struck by the strength of the Kosovo people's aspiration to democracy. They wore traditional clothing in celebration of the democratic process.

Sixteen years have passed since then, and I am glad that democracy has been taking root in Kosovo. I congratulate Mr. Hashim Thaçi on being elected President. However, the proceedings of the Kosovo Assembly have recently been subject to a series of violent disruptions by opposition parties. The fact that tear gas was sprayed inside the Assembly chamber during the presidential election is a cause of grave concern. My delegation urges those responsible to refrain from using violence. They should realize that any violence runs counter to the Kosovar people's determination to achieve democracy. We have strong hopes that the Assembly will be normalized expeditiously.

Reconciliation between the two major ethnic groups in Kosovo is critical to its future as well as that of the Western Balkans region. In that regard, I welcome the continued dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade. We welcome the most recent meeting between Prime Ministers Isa Mustafa and Aleksandar Vučić. That meeting, facilitated by the European Union, took place on 7 February. When I served in Kosovo, there was no such dialogue. At that time, it was almost impossible to travel between Belgrade and Pristina by car. I hear that people now cross the border freely.

I encourage both the Serbian and Kosovar authorities to redouble their efforts to sort out their differences and normalize their relations through continued dialogue. I recall being on the bridge in Mitrovica crossing the Ibar River on New Year's Eve in 1999. UNMIK was organizing the millennium ceremony on the bridge, and representatives of the different ethnic groups — Kosovar Albanians, Kosovar Serbs — were all together. In that ceremony, everybody promised that they would walk together for the future of Kosovo. I earnestly invite all political leaders in Kosovo to remember that speech. I have faith in the people of Kosovo, their readiness and strong determination for democracy, and their belief in a better future.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Zahir Tanin, for his briefing. I also thank Mr. Ivica Dačić and Ms. Vlora Çitaku for their statements.

Like my Japanese colleague, I have my own memories of Pristina. I had the privilege to visit it 16 years ago as a member of a Security Council delegation. Since then the Security Council and UNMIK have continued to play an important role in supporting Kosovo's institutions to tackle the many challenges that lie ahead. Ukraine strongly supports the work of Mr. Tanin and UNMIK in promoting security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo and in the region, as well as in its constructive engagement with Pristina and Belgrade. We also commend the UNMIK partners on the ground, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Kosovo Force and the European Union Rule of Law Mission and the European Union for their cooperation and continuing contributions to peace and progress in Kosovo.

Ukraine takes note of the latest report (S/2016/99) of the Secretary-General on UNMIK, submitted pursuant to resolution 1244 (1999). We agree with the Secretary-General's analysis and observations on the situation in Kosovo and urge all related parties to take measures to stabilize the situation and reach the necessary consensus on the implementation of previously reached agreements. I would like to focus on four main points that we consider important for further stabilization.

First, Ukraine welcomes the continuation of the negotiation process between Belgrade and Pristina and the achieved agreements under the auspices of the European Union last year. We welcome the signing and ratification of the Stabilization and Association Agreement between the European Union and Kosovo and support its European integration. At the same time, we are deeply concerned about the latest acts of violence by Kosovo opposition parties. Those actions have a negative impact not only on the security situation in Kosovo, but also on the whole process of implementation of the package of the Belgrade-Pristina agreements. Such actions are unacceptable, and we call on all political actors in Kosovo to abstain from all forms of violence. We reiterate the calls for respect for the rule of law, democratic procedures and international norms.

Secondly, Ukraine welcomes the agreement on the establishment of the association of Serb majority municipalities in Kosovo and supports the commitment by the Kosovo institutions to continue this process. This agreement is an important mechanism for further stabilization; delaying its implementation would be a step in the wrong direction and would erode the mutual trust that is necessary in any dialogue process.

Thirdly, Ukraine commends the establishment of the specialist court and the agreement of the Government of the Netherlands announced on 15 January to host that institution in The Hague.

Fourthly, we fully share the view of the Secretary-General that it is important to continue the progress made in the integration into Kosovo of institutions of former Serbian civil protection personnel. We also commend the initiatives by business leaders within the Chamber of Commerce in both Belgrad and Pristina to put aside political problems and to build new cooperation within the business community.

Mr. Gasso Matoses (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would first like to express my appreciation for briefing of the Special Representative, Ambassador Tanin, on the text of the most report (S/2016/99) of the Secretary-General. I also like welcome the presence of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and of Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

Ambassador Tanin has provided us with an interesting analysis of the current situation in the territory of Kosovo. It is interesting and at the same time worrisome. From what he described, and given the text of the report of the Secretary-General that we have before us, it seems that the situation in Kosovo continues to be unstable. A peaceful development of political activity that is in keeping with the law is increasingly replaced by violent demonstrations and aggressive actions, even within the Parliament, that are entirely unacceptable. Spain notes with great concern that the climate of political tension that the Secretary-General highlighted in his report (S/2015/833) in October has not improved. To the contrary, it is becoming a recurrent standard in the political life of Pristina. Spain is also worried by the recurrent use of incendiary rhetoric, which is once again reflected in the report of the Secretary-General. This is clear evidence that we are far from being able to speak of true and lasting reconciliation between the various communities that share the territory of Kosovo.

Everything that I have just said once again demonstrates the fact that the presence of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), and possibly of other international missions in Kosovo, continues to be essential. This also clearly underscores that the Security Council must remain attentive to this topic, working on it regularly and assiduously, as we have in the past.

As is well known, Spain strongly supports the high-level dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina facilitated by the European Union. We take note of the most recent meeting held in that context on 27 January. We view that as a step in the right direction, following the total absence of high-level meetings during the three-month reporting period covered by the report of the Secretary-General. However, we regret that at that last meeting there was no significant progress made or progress on new agreements or, which perhaps is worse and more worrisome, progress on the implementation of the agreements already reached. The Brussels dialogue must continue to have a central and priority nature. Abandonment of this key aspect, which appears to be reflected in the report of the Secretary-General, runs the risk of progressive deterioration of trust, and that inevitably would have negative repercussions on the European perspective regarding the many efforts the European Union is making at this time. It is not realistic to consider making new demands without showing beforehand the readiness to implement what has already been agreed to.

In that context, we would like once again to call attention to the need to implement, without delay, the agreement reached on the association/community of Serb majority municipalities in Kosovo. That agrement was reached in good faith, and it should be followed up by the efforts of all to make it a reality, including active and committed work for its implementation with the various political and social actors, as well as at the legislative level.

Finally, I would like to comment on something mentioned in paragraph 3 of the report of the Secretary-General — a comment on the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union. As is known, the content of the Stabilization and Association Agreement of Kosovo affects only the exclusive competencies of the European Union, which preserves the position of those member States of the European Union that do not recognize the validity of the unilateral declaration of independence. For Spain and the other countries that do not recognize it, the Agreement is an end in itself. It incorporates the territory of Kosovo into the stabilization and association process, but it does not establish precedents nor does it imply the inclusion of this territory in the process of the expansion of the European Union. This is in keeping with the constructive position of Spain, which we have repeatedly expressed in the Council. It is a constructive position, without detriment, that respects positions of principle. Along those lines, and as long as that position is respected, we are more than ready to support measures that could benefit the entire population of the territory of Kosovo.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

We express our appreciation for the briefing of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Zahir Tanin. We also welcome the participation in this meeting of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

Venezuela wishes to reiterate its full support for international law represented in the peaceful settlement of disputes, non-intervention and respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Serbia. In that regard, we believe that resolution 1244 (1999) continues to be the applicable international legal basis to reach a general solution in the framework of a political negotiation on the issue of Kosovo. We recognize that the United Nations has been playing a key role in Kosovo, especially through UNMIK, through the promotion of security, stability and respect for human rights. That work has been complemented by the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX).

UNMIK, KFOR and EULEX, based on their respective mandates, must continue to play a proactive, balanced, neutral and complementary role in direct dialogue with a view to promoting a lasting, sustainable, fair and mutually acceptable solution to the issue of Kosovo. That is especially so at present, since the last time that the Council met to study this issue (see S/PV.7563), the opposition has continued its activities and made it impossible to continue discussing important aspects of the implementation of the First Agreement on Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations of 19 April 2013. That fills us with concern. For Venezuela, dialogue among the various Kosovar political sectors is a necessity to prevent continued acts of violence, which may affect efforts to fulfil the 2013 agreements.

Venezuela supports dialogue in Brussels between Serbia and the local authorities of the province of Kosovo in order to reach a mutually agreeable solution between the parties. We deplore the fact that high-level meetings have not been held recently. However, progress in certain technical areas, such as telecommunications and relations between the Chambers of Commerce, are positive. We suggest that the parties continue conversations and their efforts, aimed at rapprochement. We believe that is essential for the parties to continue their work to establish the association of Serb-majority municipalities in northern Kosovo. We call on the authorities of that province to pursue that process over the short term, as agreed at the highest level in Brussels.

As on previous occasions, we are once again struck by the what the report refers to as the low number of voluntary returns of Serbs who had been displaced from their homes in Kosovo. We believe that, in follow up to the Brussels Agreement of 2013, no effort should be spared at the State and local levels to ensure security, religious tolerance, property and economic rights and the freedom of movement of Kosovo Serbs. Only in that way will real national reconciliation be obtained on the basis of the promotion and respect for human rights and the full application of international standards in this area to prevent discrimination against displaced persons and minorities.

With regard to cultural and religious heritage, we stress the need for the parties to work together to effectively protect the important heritage of the various Kosovar communities. We also call on the parties to step up their joint work to clarify the situation of those who disappeared during the war, and we commend the efforts that have been made going forward in that area. Moreover, we welcome the work carried out by UN-Women with survivors of acts of sexual violence committed during the war and the awareness campaigns on gender violence.

With regard to the fight against impunity, we welcome the offer of the Government of the Netherlands to host the specialist court to investigate accusations of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the armed conflict in Kosovo. We will call on all the parties concerned to continue their work so that the court can begin its work as soon possible. The enforcement of justice in respect to those cases, within the framework of due process, will facilitate reconciliation and peace between all parties.

We recognize the efforts of the authorities of the province of Kosovo to continue implementing measures to combat the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters with a view to preventing the recruitment of the citizens of the province by terrorist organizations. The fight against terrorism must be bolstered by effective strategies directed against social exclusion, poverty, violence and intolerant ideologies in order to prevent radicalization, especially among young people. Furthermore, work must be done to effectively implement the Security Council and General Assembly resolutions prohibiting the funding, training and transferring of weapons to those groups.

To conclude, once again we encourage the parties to redouble their efforts in the search for a peaceful, fair and lasting political solution within the framework of international law, including full compliance with resolution 1244 (1999) and the Brussels Agreement of 2013.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

Mr. Dačić has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I give him the floor.

Mr. Dačić (Serbia) (*spoke in Serbian; interpretation provided by the delegation*): I wish to react to statement made by the representative of the provisional institutions of Kosovo and Metohija.

Before every Security Council meeting, the representatives of the European Union, the United Kingdom and the United States give us suggestions on how to act in the spirit of reconciliation so as to comport ourselves more calmly. Do they offer the same recommendations to the representatives of Pristina that they give to us? Do they expect us to sit here and listen to the most ferocious accusations directed against us and events of the 1950s and 1960s, when the former Yugoslavia and Tito were paragons of democracy compared to Enver Hoxha. We could go back even further in time to the fourteenth century. We are not competing for an Oscar for our performance in the Security Council.

I should therefore like to point out to the representative of Kosovo that no matter how many often we extend our hand, there is no one on the other side to accept that gesture of reconciliation. There has been no mention of the topic before us today — the current situation in Kosovo. What does Serbia have to do with Kosovo's problems in Pristina? What does Serbia have to do with Kosovo's inability to hold a session of Parliament without having to resort to tear gas? I have to say that the representatives of Serbia are the most active in Kosovo's Parliament. Serbia has no role and does not participate in Kosovo's political life.

The representative of Kosovo cannot lecture us with regard to witnesses. She knows what happened in the Haradinaj case — all participants were either killed or are inactive. Whoever perpetrated the crime should be brought to justice. When we listen to the representative of Kosovo, we might conclude that there were no Serbs living in Kosovo and that only police and military officers are present there. However, she knows only too well that the Serbs were once a majority in Kosovo. Those are historical facts. She knows how many religious and cultural sites remain in Kosovo. I would ask her not to say that 200,000 Serbs are forbidden to return to Kosovo when she has no right to say so. Kosovo is not hers, and Kosovo is not mine. Kosovo is not Albanian, nor does it belong to Serbia. Kosovo is in the hands of the people who live there — Serbs and Albanians — and depends on their votes. One cannot conclude an agreement and then say "we need to consult our constitutional court"; if so, then we can consult our own court in Belgrade. A criminal charge was brought against me for that.

When Ms. Çitaku speaks about national minorities in Serbia, she cannot say that there are Albanian or Kosovar national minorities in Serbia. She cannot have the Albanian national minority on her behalf as well as on behalf of Albanians living in Albania.

Ms. Çitaku spoke of the right to self-determination, which she has already used: there is a State where Albanians live, and it is called Albania. She does not have that right, because she was a national minority in the former Yugoslavia and in Serbia and, without any agreement from the country from which she seceded, they unilaterally declared independence. I must warn that happened to us could tomorrow happen to any country. Please do not say that principles do not count. That is why we do not recognize the unilateral declaration of independence. If Kosovo were sovereign and independent, she would not be sitting here under this format as "Ms. Vlora Çitaku", but would be "the representative of the Republic of Kosovo". If Kosovo were independent, it would sign an association and stabilization agreement with the European Union as a country, not as a territory.

I did not want to raise this issue, instead I wanted to talk about what we have been able to achieve thus far and to look towards the future. However, Ms. Çitaku has chosen not to do that and uses each and every opportunity and meeting of the Security Council to call on others to recognize the independence of Kosovo. I should therefore like to take this opportunity to thank all the countries that have not recognize the independence of Kosovo — not because they did so as a favour to Serbia, but because that is in line with international law. I cannot wait to see the day when another country faces this problem. I have said that it is easy to speak of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other States. But this is not something on which this organ should be founded and based upon.

I would therefore ask the representatives of the European Union, the United Kingdom and the United States, when speaking to us in these meetings, to take into consideration one fact: Serbia cannot be a punching bag for the representatives of Kosovo's institutions. If they think that we are afraid of these meetings, they should know that our strength is not our weakness. Participating in this dialogue is something we are determined to continue to do.

I have had to intervene to react to the statements of Ms. Çitaku, for they were not conducive to reconciliation; in fact, they were a step backwards.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Ms. Çitaku has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give her the floor.

Ms. Çitaku: I apologize for taking up more of the Council's time. We have said several times today that the world has much more pressing issues to discuss. Nevertheless, I must reiterate several things.

The time when Kosovo sought permission and cleared its speeches with Belgrade is over. We are not afraid to tell our story. We are not afraid to deal with our own past. There was a terrible war, and in war terrible things happen. But one should never try to put a question mark between State-sponsored crime and individual actions. There is a difference. Again, we are ready to deal with our past. We hope that Serbia will soon be able to deal with its past.

When it comes to international law, again, I must reiterate that the International Court of Justice, as the highest and most professional body, issued an opinion about Kosovo's declaration of independence and its legality. The opinion was clear and unambiguous: Kosovo was within its rights when it declared its independence and we are sui generis and unlike any other ongoing or future dispute.

I was in fact happy to hear my colleague from Belgrade refer to our agreement as an international agreement. But we were not the only ones to request an opinion from the constitutional court. Serbia did the same some months ago with the agreement on diplomas. I want to reassure the Council that we will implement every agreement that we reached in Brussels — every single one — but not at the cost of the functionality of our State. That is what the ruling of the constitutional court suggested.

I also want to say that we are for reconciliation. But reconciliation cannot be built on denial. Reconciliation can be built only if we can stand tall and look at the past without fearing it — although for some that might be quite shameful.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before we adjourn, given that this is the last scheduled meeting of the Council for this month, I would like to express the sincere appreciation of the delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the members of the Security Council, especially my colleagues the permanent representatives and their respective colleagues, as well as to the Council's secretariat, for all the support afforded to us. This has undoubtedly been a month of great activity, during which we reached consensus on several important issues before us. We would not have been able to face everything we managed to address alone or without the hard work, support and positive contributions of every delegation and the staff of the Secretariat, including conference servicing personnel. Nor would the success achieved have been possible without the professionalism of our team, for which I thank them. Any failure is strictly my own.

As we conclude our presidency, I know I speak on behalf of the entire Council in wishing good luck to the delegation of Angola in the month of March. They have our full support.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7638

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7638th meeting

Wednesday, 2 March 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Gaspar Martins	(Angola)
Members:	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Yoshikawa
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mrs. Schwalger
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

Accessible document Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President: As this is the first formal meeting of the Security Council in the month of March, I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Mr. Rafael Darío Ramírez Carreño, Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, for his service as President of the Council for the month of February 2016. I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Ramírez Carreño and his delegation for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Albania, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Palau, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Turkey and Vanuatu to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/202, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Albania, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Palau, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Senegal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States, Uruguay and Vanuatu.

The Council is ready to proceed to a vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2270 (2016).

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Ms. Power (United States of America): In looking at North Korea, it can at times feel as though one is seeing two entirely different realities. One is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that is expending tremendous resources in pursuing advanced technology to build an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of carrying out a nuclear strike a continent away. The other is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in which, according to a joint assessment conducted by the World Food Programme and the North Korean Government, 25 per cent of children under the age of 5 suffer from stunted growth as a result of chronic malnutrition. One is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in which the Government brags about carrying out nuclear tests proscribed by the Security Council, such as the test carried out on 6 January. The other is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in which individuals must endure the searing pain of seeing generations of their loved ones starve to death, such as the North Korean defector who joined us in the Council Chamber just a few months ago, whose grandmother, father and two brothers had all died because they could not find enough food.

On the surface, it can seem as though those distinct North Korean realities have nothing to do with one another; yet, as we all know, they have everything to do with one another — part of the perverse reality that has no equal in this world. The chronic suffering of the people of North Korea is the direct result of the choices made by the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, a Government that has consistently prioritized its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes over providing for the most basic needs of its own people. As underscored in resolution 2270 (2016), which we have adopted today, virtually all of the resources of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are channelled into its reckless and relentless pursuit of weapons of mass destruction. The North Korean Government would rather grow its nuclear weapons programme than grow its own children. That is the reality that we are facing.

Of course, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's obsessive pursuit of weapons of mass destruction not only causes profound suffering for the people of North Korea, but also poses an extraordinary and growing threat to peace and security on the peninsula and in the region and the world. With each nuclear test and launch using ballistic-missile technology, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea improves its capability to carry out a nuclear-missile attack not only in the region, but also a continent away. That means having the ability to strike most of the countries represented in the Council. Think about that.

North Korea is the only country in the entire world that has conducted a nuclear test in the twenty-first century. In fact, it has conducted not one nuclear test but four — in 2006, 2009, 2013 and now 2016. It is also the only United Nations Member State that routinely threatens other countries with nuclear annihilation, including multiple members of the Council on different occasions.

Our collective security demands that we stop North Korea from continuing along this destructive and destabilizing course. Yet we have to be honest that while previous multilateral efforts, including the four previous sanctions resolutions adopted by the Council, have undoubtedly made it more difficult for North Korea to advance its weapons programmes, the regime continues to plough ahead, as it has demonstrated over the past two months. That is why the resolution we have just adopted is so much tougher than any prior North Korea resolution and why it goes further than any sanctions regime in two decades. We have studied the ways that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has been able to exploit gaps and evade measures aimed at impeding its nuclear-weapons and ballistic-missile programmes, and we have put in place new measures to fill those gaps, one by one. Let me give just a few of many examples of how the resolution adopted today does this.

North Korea generates a significant share of the money it uses to fuel its nuclear and ballistic-missile programmes by mining natural resources, often exploiting workers in slave-like conditions and selling those resources abroad. For example, it is estimated that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea brings in approximately $1 billion a year in coal exports — roughly one-third of the revenue it earns from exports — and at least $200 million a year in iron ore exports. That is why the resolution we have adopted today limits and, in some instances, bans outright North Korea's exports of specific natural resources, making it tougher for the Government to get the money it needs to keep funding its illicit weapons programmes.

Until today, in many countries around the world inspectors required information providing reasonable grounds to inspect cargo coming into and going out of North Korea. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea therefore took the ballistic-missile parts, nuclear technology and other illicit items it needed to build weapons of mass destruction and buried them deep in otherwise unsuspicious loads on airplanes, ships and trucks coming into the country. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea used similar tactics to hide the illegal items it was exporting, such as weapons, drugs and counterfeit goods, which it used to generate a significant amount of additional income. That is why, under resolution 2270 (2016), cargo going into and coming out of North Korea will be treated as suspicious, and countries will be required to inspect it whether it goes by air, land or sea. This is hugely significant.

North Korea used to be able to import aviation fuel, which included rocket fuel used to launch proscribed ballistic missiles. It can no longer do so. The resolution adopted today bans all imports of aviation fuel, including rocket fuel. For years, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea deployed arms dealers, smugglers, financiers and other enablers of its illicit weapons programmes, and claimed that they were diplomats and Government representatives around the world. Abusing diplomatic protections, these individuals cut illicit deals, set up shell companies and procured banned items to aid North Korea's weapons programme. The resolution adopted today obligates countries to expel any North Korean who carries out such acts, including diplomats of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Despite previous financial sanctions that constrain North Korea's access to the international financial system, North Korean banks were still able to do business on foreign territory, allowing the Government to fund its illicit programmes. Under the resolution adopted today, States around the world will have to shut down the financial institutions of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in their territory.

North Korean scientists have used specialized trainings at academic institutions and international research centres to obtain technical expertise that they then put to use to advance the nuclear-weapons and ballistic-missile programmes of the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The resolution adopted today prohibits the specialized training of any Democratic People's Republic of Korea national in fields that could be used to advance these programmes, including nuclear- and space-related technical exchanges.

As these measures make abundantly clear, the purpose of the resolution is not to inflict greater hardship on the people of North Korea, who endure immeasurable suffering under one of the most repressive Governments the modern world has ever seen. The United States has repeatedly urged the Council to address the human rights violations committed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which the United Nations commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in its comprehensive 2014 report, concluded were widespread and systematic and had been committed "pursuant to policies established at the highest level of the State" (*A/HRC/25/63, para. 75*). These violations include detaining between 80,000 and 120,000 people in prison camps where, according to the commission's report, they have for generations been

> "gradually eliminated through deliberate starvation, forced labour, executions, torture, rape and the denial of reproductive rights" (*ibid., para. 60*).

The Government has carried out enforced disappearances for decades with no accountability, including of citizens from neighbouring countries, whose families continue to suffer from not knowing the fate of their loved ones.

The scale and gravity of such abuses are what led us to push, along with our partners, to make the human rights situation in North Korea a permanent item on the Security Council's agenda, as it now is. North Korea continues to show, as we have repeatedly said in the Council, that Governments that flagrantly violate the human rights of their own people almost always show similar disdain for the international norms that help ensure our shared security. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's abysmal human rights record is another reason why we have taken steps to ensure that the sanctions laid out in the resolution specifically target the Government, which carries out these grave abuses with impunity.

It is deeply important that today's resolution and all the tough measures it includes have been adopted with the support of all 15 members of the Security Council. In particular, the United States would like to recognize the leadership of China, which has worked closely with us in negotiating this extremely rigorous resolution. Beyond the Council, it is worth noting the unanimity among and leadership of the countries of the region — China, Japan and the Republic of Korea — which understand so clearly the threat to our shared security posed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's actions. The fact that the resolution has been sponsored by 50 Member States, drawn from every region of the world, demonstrates both the recognition of the global threat posed by North Korea and the international community's commitment to working together to address that threat.

We are clear-eyed about the nature of this regime. We are under no illusions that, following the adoption of resolution 2270 (2016), the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will abruptly abandon its prohibited weapons programme due to a sudden realization that the international community is united in its determination to stop North Korea's dangerous pursuit of nuclear weapons. Were that to be the case, North Korea would have given up its nuclear-weapons and ballistic-missile programmes long ago. On the contrary, the North Korean Government has shown that it is determined to evade every obstacle put in the way of its singular pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, no matter the consequences for its people.

Yet, at the same time, we have seen how the strategy of increasing multilateral pressure can be effective, and that is what we are doing here. Even as we find new ways to impede North Korea's efforts to advance its nuclear-weapons and ballistic-missile programmes, as our collective security and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's track record demand that we do, we must not lose sight of the ultimate goal of bringing North Korea back to the table for serious and credible diplomatic negotiations on denuclearization. Achieving that goal will require sustained unity on the part of the

Council and the unwavering commitment of all Member States to implementing in full the comprehensive, robust and unprecedented sanctions that we have put in place today.

Mr. Yoshikawa (Japan): Since this is the first time that I address the Council under your presidency, Sir, let me congratulate you on Angola's assumption of the Council presidency for the month of March, and express my full support to you and your mission.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

I also wish to express my deep gratitude to Ambassador Ramírez Carreño and his team for their outstanding work in the Council presidency for February.

(*spoke in English*)

Japan welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2270 (2016), which is comprehensive and ground-breaking. We would like to express our sincere appreciation to the United States for taking the lead. Our appreciation also goes to China for its efforts. I also want to thank the 50 Member States, including 10 members of the Security Council, that co-sponsored this important resolution. Japan also contributed to and co-sponsored the resolution, because it sends a strong and unprecedented message to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Sanctions are important tools for finding a comprehensive solution to a problem, and, to that end, there has to be dialogue. In order for the dialogue to be effective, there has to be pressure at the same time. That is the very reason that we now have this robust resolution.

Japan, together with the international community, strongly condemns the repeated violations of Security Council resolutions by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to fully comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions, including the one we just adopted, as well as to honour its other international commitments. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea must realize that this message does not only come from the members of the Security Council, but from the international community as a whole. Let us be very clear: no single country in the world supports the nuclear test or ballistic missile launch by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

This resolution includes many important measures, but I want to highlight only some of them. It bans the importation from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of natural resources such as coal, iron, gold and rare earth minerals. It bans supplying the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with aviation fuel, including rocket fuel. And it calls for mandatory inspection of all cargo coming into and out of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. I will not go into further details, simply because the robustness of the resolution speaks for itself.

Resolutions and sanctions are effective only when implemented. Therefore, what we have achieved today is not the end, only the beginning. Now we must fully implement the measures set out in the resolution. I take this opportunity to call on all Member States to fulfil their own obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions. I wish to confirm that Japan will fully implement the resolution. In that connection, I would like to propose that the Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006) — the Permanent Representative of Spain, Ambassador Oyarzun Marchesi — arrange an open briefing to go through the provisions of the new resolution with all United Nations Members.

Sanctions are not the final objective. I would like to draw the attention of Member States, especially that of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, to paragraph 51 of the resolution, which affirms that the Council

> "shall keep the DPRK's actions under continuous review and is prepared to strengthen, modify, suspend or lift measures as may be needed in light of the DPRK's compliance".

Depending on the behaviour and attitude of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Security Council is prepared to suspend or lift sanctions.

Before concluding my statement, I would like to make clear that these sanctions are not meant to target the ordinary citizens in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We must not forget that the nuclear and ballistic programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are being pursued at the expense of the welfare of the people of that country. We therefore welcome the fact that a stronger emphasis was made in the resolution on humanitarian and human rights concerns, which include the abductions issue, one of Japan's most greatest concerns with regard to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In order to bring a comprehensive solution to the problems related to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, it is essential that the Security Council remain seized of the situation in that country in all relevant aspects. We will continue to closely cooperate with our fellow partners in the Council and all Member States of the United Nations.

Mr. Delattre (France): (*spoke in French*): Allow me to begin by thanking Venezuela for its presidency during the month of February and by wishing every success to the presidency of Angola. I also thank the United States for having presented resolution 2270 (2016), which we have just adopted unanimously.

In carrying out its fourth nuclear test, on 6 January, and a long-range launch using ballistic technology, on 7 February, North Korea once again decided to defy the international community. Those two acts, which are seriously destabilizing in effect and in flagrant violation of Security Council resolutions, not only pose a threat to international and regional peace security, but also defy the non-proliferation regime, which is the backbone of our collective security.

It was up to the Security Council to challenge that defiance and act decisively by adopting resolution 2270 (2016). Now it is done. Our adoption of this resolution significantly strengthens the sanctions regime and represents a turning point in the Council's approach to the North Korean proliferation crisis. Several elements are worth highlighting.

First, the resolution decides to put in place unprecedented sanctions against North Korea and sends a united and unambiguous message on the part of the Security Council to Pyongyang, namely, that there is a price to pay for the provocations and the irresponsible and destabilizing headlong rush by the Pyongyang regime.

Moreover, the sanctions adopted today have targeted goals. They aim, on the one hand, at hindering and putting an end to the North Korean nuclear and ballistic missile programmes in a concrete manner. On the other hand, the sanctions target the diverted revenue of the North Korean regime to fuel the illicit programmes at the expense of the North Korean people, who continue to suffer under the yoke of totalitarianism.

Finally, the resolution keeps the door open for dialogue and insists on the need to resume the Six-Party Talks. Our final objective is not sanctions, but rather denuclearization and peace and stability on the peninsula through a negotiated solution.

It is up to North Korea to show in a sincere way and through concrete gestures that it is ready to resume dialogue with a view to giving up its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. The spiral of provocation leads us to an impasse and offers us no other option than to strengthen sanctions, as a means and not as an end of themselves. Dialogue and negotiations, based on a very firm position, are the only viable option to ensure the full and verifiable denuclearization of the peninsula.

Owing to all of those reasons, France voted for the adoption of this resolution, co-sponsored it along with approximately 50 Member States and will continue to be mobilized to ensure its full implementation.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): On 6 January, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in defiance of the universal opposition of the international community, once again conducted a nuclear test, and on 7 February used ballistic technology to launch a satellite in a series of violations of the relevant Security Council resolutions. China has expressed its explicit opposition to those actions.

China has always insisted on the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, insisted on the maintenance of peace and stability on the peninsula and insisted on resolving problems through dialogue and consultations. Resolution 2270 (2016), adopted by the Council today, embodies the principles inherent in those three "insists". The resolution demonstrates the international community's seriousness in opposing the further development of the nuclear and missile capacity of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and safeguarding the international non-proliferation regime and reaffirms the commitment to seeking a solution to the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula through dialogue and consultations and to supporting the resumption of the Six-Party Talks and the Joint Statement of 19 September 2005, thus facilitating the effort to seek a peaceful solution to the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula.

China has always advocated for the peaceful settlement of international disputes and hot-spot issues through political and diplomatic means such as dialogue and negotiations. Sanctions are not an end in themselves, and Security Council resolutions cannot fundamentally resolve the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula. Today's resolution should be a new starting point, paving the way for a political settlement of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula.

History has demonstrated repeatedly that dialogue and negotiations represent the only right way to address the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula if we are to achieve an early improvement of the situation on the ground and explore viable ways to resolve the matter. China urges the parties concerned to push forward negotiations to advance denuclearization and replace the peace mechanism in parallel. While keeping the general direction of denuclearization, this approach accommodates in a balanced way the main concerns of the parties involved, helps find a way towards the resumption of talks and is practicable. China is willing to work with the parties concerned to explore in depth specific steps to put this idea into practice and hopes that all parties concerned will work together to this end.

As a close neighbour to the Korean peninsula and a State that bears an important responsibility for stability there, China has always insisted on the overall goal of denuclearization of the peninsula, opposed conflicts and chaos in that area and worked to safeguard the legitimate security interests of itself and other countries of the region. At this moment, all the parties concerned should avoid actions that will further aggravate the tensions on the ground. China opposes the deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense anti-missile system on the Korean peninsula because such an action harms the strategic security interests of China and other countries of the region, goes against the goal of maintaining peace, security and stability of the peninsula and will seriously undermine the efforts of the international community to find a political solution to the question of the Korean peninsula.

Currently, the situation on the Korean peninsula is highly complex and sensitive, which makes it all the more necessary for us to keep calm and use diplomatic wisdom. China hopes that the parties concerned will meet China half way, always keeping in mind the overall need to maintain the peace and stability of the Korean peninsula and North-East Asia, make determined efforts to the dispel the dark cloud of war, pool our wisdom and actively seek common understanding and work together for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. China will continue to take a responsible approach to enhancing communication and coordination with the parties concerned and play an active and constructive role for an early realization of lasting stability and peace on the Korean peninsula.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Security Council has just unanimously adopted a new resolution that tightens the international sanctions regime against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (resolution 2270 (2016)). This resolution resulted from the fact that over the past two months the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's has undertaken banned military activity in the form of conducting a nuclear-weapons test and launching a ballistic missile, thereby raising tensions on the Korean peninsula and in the region as a whole. The Russian Federation strongly condemns the violation by Pyongyang of resolutions of the Security Council.

Today it is important to focus on what happens after the adoption of the resolution. The set of sanctions envisioned is quite harsh. However, the document does leave open the possibility for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to return to the Six-Party process, which should be urgently resumed. Sanctions in this case are not an end in themselves, but rather a means. By shutting down the financing of nuclear and ballistic-missile programmes as much as possible, we intend to ensure a return to the negotiating table to take up all issues of concern to all the interested parties.

The Russian Federation remains convinced that there is no alternative to a political and diplomatic solution to the issue of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. Russia is very seriously worried about the negative trends and the way the situation in North-East Asia has been developing. We are concerned about attempts to use the actions of Pyongyang as a justification for military build-up in the region, including of offensive weapons and the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence anti-missile system.

The resolution we have adopted today should not be used to choke off the North Korean economy. In that regard, we are concerned about the hasty introduction, even before today's resolution was adopted, of unilateral sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which could have very negative humanitarian consequences for the many millions of inhabitants of the country, especially those who are most vulnerable. The international community, and first and foremost those humanitarian organizations that are providing assistance and technical support to Pyongyang, should pay special attention to this aspect.

The events of the past year show that even the most complex international crisis situations can be resolved through cooperation and dialogue and when there is political will by all parties to find mutually acceptable solutions. We call on all participants of the Six-Party Talks to resume the talks as soon as possible. Russia is ready to engage in this kind of cooperation.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom strongly supports the unanimous adoption of resolution 2270 (2016). I join my colleagues in welcoming the robust new measures that it brings into force, thanks to strong and united action by the Security Council.

This resolution is a step change. It contains some of the toughest measures the Security Council has ever taken. It addresses the will of the Council as we expressed in our press statement of 6 January 2016 (SC/12191), the day that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea announced it had conducted its fourth nuclear test. Since then, on 7 February, we saw the Democratic People's Republic of Korea conduct a satellite launch using ballistic-missile technology. Those events were clear and deliberate violations of previous Security Council resolutions. We could not allow them to pass without a robust response. We must deter and impede the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from continuing to pursue such illegal actions.

We remain deeply concerned by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's continued development of nuclear and missile programmes. It is in flagrant defiance of the Security Council's resolutions and flies in the face of international condemnation, and it means that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea regime has even fewer national resources available for the health and welfare of its people.

Resolution 2270 (2016) is not intended to have adverse humanitarian consequences for the country's civilian population. The resolution is not intended to negatively affect activities not prohibited by this or previous Security Council resolutions. The resolution is not intended to negatively affect the work of international organizations or non-governmental organizations carrying out assistance and relief activities in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Taking this intention into account, it is clear that the resolution's provisions, including on the export of aviation fuel, are not intended to curtail legitimate humanitarian and diplomatic activities in the country. The Council will need to be vigilant in that regard. Additionally, we note for clarification that the new provisions on cargo inspection are consistent with the obligations set out in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

Finally, we again welcome the resolve of the Council in expediting this robust new resolution. We strongly encourage all States to implement its provisions in full. And above all, we continue to urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to return to credible and authentic multilateral talks on its nuclear programme, to abide by its obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to commit to full access by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain had no doubts about co-sponsoring resolution 2270 (2016), for three reasons.

First, in recent years the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has, on various occasions — probably too many — shown an unequivocal determination to develop its nuclear programme as well as its missile technology, thereby breaching the international non-proliferation regime and repeatedly violating Security Council sanctions.

The Council, as a consequence, is obliged to react for two very important reasons: first, because this implies the practical development by North Korea of a military capacity, which is very seriously threatening peace and stability on the peninsula and in the region; and, secondly, because resolution 2094 (2013) states clearly the Council's determination to adopt further significant measures if the Democratic People's Republic of Korea carries out a new missile launch or a nuclear test. We therefore had no other choice than to comply with what is established and to adopt these further significant measures.

Secondly, as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006), Spain has a special responsibility to ensure that Security Council decisions are complied with with due effectiveness, transparency and rigour. That is why we will be providing an open briefing to the membership over the next few days.

Member States have concentrated their efforts in this area, but we must be honest and acknowledge that the previous sanctions regime was not as effective as it could have been in that it was not able to prevent the North Korean regime from continuing with its arms-development programme. We believe that this new resolution will be a useful tool for achieving this efficiency and, of course, as Chair we will work closely with other members to ensure the practical implementation of measures that will ensure the achievement of the ultimate goal of these measures: that North Korea once again becomes part of the non-proliferation regime, thereby guaranteeing peace and stability on the peninsula.

Finally, I should like to touch on what may be a very important idea with regard to the future, and I should like to stress that this idea was already mentioned by certain speakers: namely, that the sanctions are not a goal but a means of achieving lasting peace and stability. Nor are they in any way a punishment of the population. The sanctions are designed to have an effect on the elites of the regime, not its citizens. We are convinced that only a radical change of attitude on the part of the Government of Pyongyang can offer people the opportunity that they deserve: nothing more than the ability to live a normal life.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like at the outset to take this opportunity to wish you every success, Sir, in your functions as President of the Security Council during the month of March and reiterate to you our full support for all of your initiatives and endeavours.

Resolution 2270 (2016), which the Security Council has just adopted, condemns the nuclear test and the launching of a rocket with ballistic-missile technology carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in January and February, respectively. It stresses the concern of the international community at the negative consequences of these acts for international peace and security, in particular on the Korean peninsula, which increases the risk of a possible confrontation. The seriousness of these events requires the Security Council to redouble its efforts to promote dialogue and negotiation between the parties in order to contribute to a negotiated solution to this crisis.

In this context, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, committed as we are to non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament and the need to focus on the consensus reached among the countries of the region, voted in favour of the resolution because we believe that the implementation of the measures set out in the resolution and in other Security Council resolutions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea should have the single objective of helping to find a political peaceful solution to the issue of the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, with the aim of strengthening peace and stability in the region.

The measures set out in the resolution must be applied in a responsible and transparent manner, with a view to achieving specific goals, in keeping with the principles of international law and with clear benchmarks for their lifting if the Democratic People's Republic of Korea complies with the demand that it put an end to its nuclear programme. This is not about undermining a Government or punishing its people, but about making progress in the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. We therefore need to ensure that the measures emanating from this resolution do not have negative humanitarian consequences for the civilian population and do not affect their human rights or the well-being of the North Korean people.

In this regard, we are concerned that the restrictions imposed on imports of raw materials into the country could have an impact on the population. We also believe that these exceptional measures on this issue must not serve as a precedent to limit the right of States to the sovereign use of their natural resources for their own economic and social development in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1803 (XVII).

We call upon all parties to act with caution in order to avoid an escalation of tensions in the region that could degenerate into an armed conflict. In this regard, we should work hand in hand, with a comprehensive focus on various mechanisms and formulas, so as to gradually build an environment for dialogue that will lead to peace, with the aim of strengthening the basis for a negotiated and sustainable resolution of the issue, in order to preserve and guarantee the stability of the Korean peninsula.

The implementation of the measures listed in resolution 2270 (2016) should in no way hamper the cooperation provided by international organizations to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea aimed at creating the conditions for stability and well-being that are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations between countries, such as those established by Chapter IX of the Charter of the United Nations. In this regard, we appreciate the efforts of the multilateral organizations that have provided technical assistance to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and that continue to back projects aimed at promoting human development, the achievement of the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals and increased food security for vulnerable groups in rural areas in the country.

In conclusion, we reiterate our call to Member States that have influence in this sphere to undertake the efforts necessary to promote a climate of trust that will help to break the impasse in a peaceful and constructive manner, through the relaunching of the Six-Party Talks as the most important mechanism for easing tensions on the Korean peninsula and the only way to peacefully resolve these differences.

The initiatives taken to achieve the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and to maintain peace and security there through diplomatic measures and political negotiations constitute the path that should be followed so as to build a lasting peaceful solution.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): Let me congratulate you and wish you, Mr. President, every success on Angola's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council in March. I also wish to congratulate Ambassador Rafael Darío Ramírez Carreño on a successful and productive Venezuelan presidency in February. I join other colleagues in expressing appreciation to the delegations of China and the United States, as well as all Council members, for the tremendous work leading to the adoption of resolution 2270 (2016).

Malaysia welcomes the adoption of this very important text. Given the far-reaching implications of the resolution, we would have preferred ample time to consider the text. However, considering the exigencies involved and the need for proper consultations with our respective authorities, we had to expeditiously work to ensure that the spirit and intent of the resolution were appreciated, so that it could be adopted in a timely manner.

Malaysia unequivocally reaffirms its belief that illicit development and procurement of weapons of mass destruction and related technologies and capabilities by any State is unacceptable and cannot be tolerated by the international community. Such activities undermine the work and commitment of all Member States to peaceful relations with each other and to the peaceful resolution of conflict. Those are our core values. It is for that reason that Malaysia voted in favour and co-sponsored the resolution.

The Korean peninsula has gone through a periodic cycle of ups and downs. It would benefit from more predictability of inter-State behaviour through greater engagement and dialogue. It requires a change of attitude and embracing more trust to pursue all peaceful means of resolving the outstanding issues between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its neighbours and other interlocutors, not just for the sake on securing peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and the wider region, but equally, if not more important, so that the benefits of enduring peace, security and stability could prosper the nation and the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Malaysia remains convinced that the interests of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its grievances could be best served by its return to the negotiating table. We call upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to recommit itself to the resumption of peaceful dialogue and negotiations under the six-party talks framework. As others in the region have reaped the seeds of mutual trust, cooperation and prosperity sown before, so too should the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea enjoy such benefits of sustained peace and socioeconomic development. It could learn from the economic success stories of its immediate neighbours.

The inclusion of language safeguarding humanitarian exemptions in the text is a crucial element. It will prevent the effects of possible unintended consequences against legitimate interests, particularly related to the livelihoods and the humanitarian situation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea population. We are fully supportive of that. Malaysia wishes to underscore that interpretation of relevant provisions in the resolution must not be a pretext to disrupt diplomatic access and further impede the conduct of legitimate diplomatic and humanitarian activities in the country, as stipulated under the Vienna and Geneva conventions respectively.

Our primary goal is to see the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. We must not be diverted from that goal. We wish to see the Democratic People's Republic of Korea return to the negotiation table and embrace change that builds trust to pursue shared security and prosperity through international cooperation. As a member of the Council, we remain committed to doing our part, including through the work of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006) concerning the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mrs. Schwalger (New Zealand): We too congratulate Angola on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. New Zealand welcomes the adoption of resolution 2270 (2016), imposing strengthened and expanded sanctions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Our long-standing commitment to the nuclear non-proliferation regime and to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons is well known.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's continued pursuit of its nuclear weapons programme, as demonstrated by its most recent nuclear test and ballistic-missile launch, represents one of the most serious threats to the international nonproliferation regime. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's actions stand in defiance of international law and the Council's resolutions.

When the Council met on 6 January, following the latest nuclear test, we committed to beginning work immediately to agree further significant measures in response. Today's resolution represents the fulfilment of that commitment. New Zealand co-sponsored today's resolution in recognition of the continued threat the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's actions pose to international peace and security and to the security of our Asia-Pacific region. We do so with a heavy heart, wishing that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would choose a path of providing for the well-being and basic needs of its citizens, rather than preoccupying itself with the development of a nuclear weapons programme.

The measures contained in the resolution will send a clear message to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, specifically that it will not benefit from its provocative and combative behaviour and that the best path available to it is a return, in good faith, to negotiations on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

We commend the United States and China for the leadership they have shown in preparing the measures contained in today's resolution. It is now incumbent on all Member States to ensure they are implemented fully and effectively.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): Let me begin by warmly congratulating you, Mr. President, on Angola's assumption of the presidency for this month and also by expressing our deep appreciation to Ambassador Ramírez Carreño for his leadership during the month of February.

At the outset, I would like to commend the efforts of both the United States and China in drafting and putting on the table the text of resolution 2270 (2016) in response to the recent nuclear test and rocket launch of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We appreciate the convening of the expert-level meetings on 25 and 26 February by the delegation of the United States, so that each Council member had an opportunity to raise any questions related to the resolution and its annexes.

We consider the resolution just adopted to be a comprehensive and balanced document that, on the one hand, strengthens the existing regime and reinforces it with additional sectoral and targeted sanctions and, on the other, clearly demonstrates the Council's openness to dialogue on peaceful and diplomatic solutions to the situation. Such an approach fully corresponds to the Council's intention to avoid both affecting the humanitarian situation in North Korea and aggravating tensions on the peninsula. Moreover, the document reflects the findings contained in the reports of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 1874 (2009), which in our opinion only strengthens the rationale behind new sanctions.

Ukraine has always been committed to effective multilateral action against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Our collective decision today is a historic step which clearly demonstrates the Council's consolidated and firm stance to respond decisively and eradicate any threat to the global non-proliferation regime. Ukraine is honoured to co-sponsor the resolution, which, as we all hope, will become one of the defining documents in putting an end to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's illegal activities in defiance of every international law principle.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. I wish to also take this opportunity to thank the Permanent Mission of Venezuela for its presidency of the Council last month.

At the outset, I would like to express my appreciation to the United States for its efforts in preparing resolution 2270 (2016), which has been adopted today, and to China for its diplomatic and political efforts aimed at restoring stability to and ensuring security on the Korean peninsula, as well as for its support of the preparation of the resolution. Today's unanimous adoption of resolution 2270 (2016) sends the strong message that the members of the Security Council do not accept the recent actions undertaken by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, be it the conduct of nuclear testing or the launching of ballistic missiles, which represent breaches of the relevant Security Council resolutions and international legitimacy and undermine the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in its entirety.

I also wish to register our satisfaction with the balanced language of the resolution, which takes a political direction with regard to the resumption of the six-party talks and the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, while also taking care to avoid aggravating the humanitarian situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. My delegation is of the view that the resolution constitutes a step on the long road to prevent circumvention of the NPT.

Egypt has repeatedly warned against the use of double standards with regard to challenges to the Treaty and denuclearization. One State in the Middle East remains outside of the Treaty. The members of the Security Council are well aware of the abysmal failure of the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to produce an outcome document, due to the double standards applied by certain influential international parties. Neither Egypt nor the States of the Middle East will ever accept this state of affairs. The adoption of resolution 2270 (2016) is an optimal opportunity to remind the international community and the members of the Council of that fact, and calls upon them to fulfil their responsibilities on that score.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Senegal congratulates Angola, a brotherly and friendly African country, on its assumption of the presidency for the month of March. We also take this opportunity to congratulate Angola's predecessor, Venezuela, for the excellent way in which it conducted the work of the Council last month.

Senegal champions the ideal of a world without nuclear arms and calls for the total prohibition of nuclear testing and the launching of ballistic missiles. It was in that spirit that Senegal co-sponsored and voted in favour of resolution 2270 (2016) in order to condemn the recent activities of North Korea, which constitute a threat to the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Senegal therefore welcomes the unanimous adoption of the resolution because, among the new provisions contained therein, there are restrictions on the export of certain minerals and other rare metals, unless the funds generated by those exports are used for the subsistence of the North Korean population and not to fund Pyongyang's nuclear and ballistic-missile programmes. We also note the prohibition on the import of aviation and rocket fuel, as well as the complete embargo on arms. Moreover, we stress that all goods destined for North Korea will undergo stringent inspection, which will without a doubt make it possible to increase pressure on the regime, in particular since the resolution steps up sanctions on banks and foreign assets and introduces restrictions on air links to North Korea. The resolution imposes new trade restrictions and prohibits vessels suspected of transporting illegal cargo to North Korea from entering ports.

As we have all observed, the text significantly strengthens already existing sanctions against Pyongyang due to the fourth nuclear test and the missile launches of 6 January and 7 February 2016, respectively, in violation of several Security Council resolutions. We hope that the persons and entities newly added to the sanctions list, including North Korea's space agency and intelligence services, as well as the new measures referred to previously, will strengthen the effectiveness of the sanctions regime this time. Indeed, the previous sanctions did not prevent the progressive improvement and expansion of the nuclear and ballistic missile capacity of Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which continues to flagrantly violate the resolutions and repeated demands of the Council to respect its international obligations in this area in a clear, irreversible and verifiable manner.

In conclusion, my delegation should like to stress that sanctions are not our objective; better yet, they are a means or a lever available to the Council to maintain international peace and security. We hope that these measures will contribute to the strengthening or, more specifically, the resumption of talks in the Korean peninsula for the good of the international community.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I should like to congratulate Angola on assuming the presidency of the Council in March. I also wish to thank our dear friend Raphael and the entire Venezuelan delegation for their excellent leadership of the Council during the month of February.

Uruguay co-sponsored resolution 2270 (2016) and welcomes its unanimous adoption. I should like to make a general comment using the Toledo formula that our friend Mr. Román Oyarzun Marchesi urges us to use. As such, I will not repeat all that has been said by other members with regard to the failure of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to honour its international obligations or some of the comments made by other colleagues with regard to the aims and content of the resolution.

I will limit myself simply to saying that my delegation's support for the resolution is based on our conviction that the implementation of new sanctions will not cause direct harm to the civilian population, whose humanitarian situation is already deplorable and in need of the immediate attention of the international community. We also echo the call made by other delegations with regard to the responsibility of all Member States to ensure the strict compliance of the provisions of resolution 2270 (2016). Furthermore, I reiterate that Uruguay is fully committed to continuing to work towards a peaceful, diplomatic and political solution to achieve the denculearization of the Korean peninsula.

Lastly, for my second general comment, I note that, as we understand it, the Security Council will have to continue working to ensure that the negotiating process that precedes the adoption of resolutions is more transparent and inclusive.

The President: I shall now take the floor in my national capacity.

I would like to start by thanking all representatives who have expressed good wishes to our delegation as we assume the presidency for the month of March.

Angola voted in favour of resolution 2270 (2016), joining the international consensus on the need to prevent nuclear proliferation because of the threat it poses to international peace and security. Angola views with concern the recent test and ballistic-missile launches, despite all the efforts deployed by the international community and incentives afforded to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to change its nuclear-weapons and ballistic-missile programme, which endangers security and stability in the Korean peninsula. By unanimously adopting resolution 2270 (2016), the Security Council is sending a clear signal of the international community's outright rejection of nuclear proliferation, and it is an additional deterrent to the violation of the international non-proliferation regime.

The negotiations on the resolution tried to strike a balance between the need to impose measures against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for its nuclear and ballistic-missile programmes while avoiding the imposition of general punishment on the people of North Korea and the wrecking of their basic livelihoods. Morever, the resolution leaves open a window of opportunity for negotiations in resolving the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear issue, which we would like to see all parties concerned take advantage of. Such negotiations are far more suitable, given their constructive nature and the fact that this is a problem that needs to be resolved through dialogue aimed at a constructive outcome.

Finally, we call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to negotiate a solution to this issue within the agreed frameworks with a view to breaking its isolation and reaping all benefits as a rightful member of the international community.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Oh Joon (Republic of Korea): I would first like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council this month. The Republic of Korea welcomes and supports the unanimous adoption of resolution 2270 (2016) today. We thank the United States for having taken the initiative on this resolution and the People's Republic of China for having engaged in lengthy consultations, as well as all other members of the Security Council.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's latest nuclear test and long-range missile launch are grave violations of the relevant Security Council resolutions. They pose a clear threat to international peace and security. They are by far the most serious provocations of their kind, as they show that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is advancing closer to a comprehensive and operational nuclear weapon capability. A nuclear-armed North Korea would seriously impair the regime of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and could induce an arms race in the region, undermining the security of the whole world. The international community is therefore at an important crossroads. If we cannot stop the Democratic People's Republic of Korea now, then it may soon reach the point of no return. We must act quickly and decisively to prevent this from happening.

Today's resolution introduces one of the most robust sanctions regimes in the history of the United Nations. Its unanimous adoption demonstrates the firm, united resolve of the whole international community that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's weapons of mass destruction programmes will never be tolerated. These measures, when fully implemented, will impede the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's weapons of mass destruction-related activities in all aspects, leaving Pyongyang with no other option but to choose denuclearization. We have seen in the past how effective sanctions can lead to change of policy in other contexts.

As noted in the resolution, it is deplorable that the DPRK is diverting its scarce resources to the development of weapons of mass destruction while its own citizens are suffering abject poverty and human rights abuses. As pointed out by members of the Council, while the sanctions set out in this resolution are most comprehensive in scope, they do not target the North Korean population or intend to negatively affect their livelihood. On the contrary, they explicitly target the pursuit of weapons of mass destruction by the regime that is causing the hardship of the North Korean people. We hope this resolution will help alleviate their plight.

Finally, as a fellow Korean, I would like to say a few words in appeal to those who are ruling North Korea. I would say, in Korean, "please, stop it now". I would ask them: Why do you need these weapons? In South Korea we do not have a nuclear bomb. As we border each other, you do not need an intercontinental missile if you are targeting us. Why do you need these weapons? You say that the United States is a threat to you. Why would the United States threaten you? Why would the strongest military Power in the world threaten a small country far across the Pacific? There is no threat. It is a figment of your imagination. If you continue in this way, the only people who will suffer from what you are doing are your own people, and they are also my people, and our people as well. So please, wake up, open your eyes, look out at what is happening in the world. Give up the nukes. Join the rest of us in the world and we can all live together in safety and peace."

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.

United Nations

S/PV.7639

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7639th meeting

Wednesday, 2 March 2016, 11.30 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Gaspar Martins	(Angola)
Members:	China	Mr. Zhao Yong
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. Gasso Matoses
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

---

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

Accessible document

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 11.30 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/200, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United States of America.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2271 (2016).

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Russia supported resolution 2271 (2016), which extends for a month and a half the existing Security Council sanctions on South Sudan. On the one hand, the technical nature of the resolution reflects the lack of unity in the Council on maintaining or expanding the current the sanctions regime. On the other, it illustrates the extreme importance and the sensitivity of the present moment in resolving the armed conflict in Southern Sudan.

We note that significant progress has been made in that regard, including the overall decrease in the intensity of the fighting, the launch of the mechanisms provided for in last year's peace agreement, the continuing withdrawal of Government troops from the capital and the appointment of armed opposition leader Riek Machar as first Vice-President.

Currently on the agenda is the implementation of the measures agreed by the parties last week, including practical steps to ensure security in the capital. That would open up opportunities for the formation of the transitional Government of national unity.

We welcome the efforts of international partners, in particular the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the African Union, to promote the peace process. However, the main responsibility for normalizing the situation lies in the South Sudanese themselves. They now need time and support. Pressure, on the other hand, especially more sanctions pressure, could complicate the resolution of the conflict and harden the positions of the parties. We need to be very sensitive at this stage in resolving the conflict — the Council in particular.

First of all, that pertains to introducing new sanctions measures and personal restrictions against the leaders of the opposing sides. We in principle oppose a situation where, instead of serious political and diplomatic efforts, someone tries to use Security Council sanctions. It is no accident that the January communiqué of Peace and Security Council of the African Union is silent on the issue of restrictive measures against South Sudan.

We note with satisfaction that reason once again prevailed this time among the members of the Security Council. We hope that members will adhere to the same healthy approach in the work on future draft resolutions on sanctions against South Sudan.

Mr. Pressman (United States of America): The Security Council and the United Nations remain steadfast in their commitment to support the people of South Sudan in their quest for stability, peace and good governance. Unfortunately, we have a long way to go and much work remains to be done. As such, we must work together to send the right signals to South Sudan's leaders. The Secretary-General perhaps put it best last week when he told the leaders bluntly,

> "Put peace above politics. Pursue compromise. Overcome obstacles. Establish the transitional Government of national unity, and do not delay it."

The Council has repeatedly shown its willingness to use targeted sanctions to marginalize spoilers, target those who commit violations and abuses and impose accountability for atrocities. The Council should consider carefully new proposals to use sanctions to better stabilize the situation, limit the unrestricted flow of arms and incentivize the parties towards compromise.

Rather than rush that deliberative process, the United States supports the decision of the Security Council today to renew the current sanctions measures until 15 April, and the mandate of the Panel of Experts for just a few more weeks — until 15 May. That period will allow the Council to fully discuss proposals that have been put forward by delegations around this table and allow us time to measure the progress made by the parties on implementing the peace agreement and forming the transitional Government of national unity. We fully agree that this is a delicate moment in the peace process, but it is also a critical moment: humanitarian needs are greater than ever, human rights violations persist and the people of South Sudan continue to suffer.

Parties to the conflict need to show progress on the peace agreement signed last year, an agreement which is severely lagging when it comes to implementation, as we heard Ambassador Festus Mogae, Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC), testify to last month. We urge South Sudanese parties to take the key steps necessary for the full implementation of the peace agreement.

In line with the timeline set out by the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, over the next several weeks we expect to see full cooperation by both sides on the implementation of the Juba security arrangements as decided by the JMEC Chair and agreed to by the parties on 24 February, with the return of designated Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition security to Juba. That should lead to the return of Riek Machar to Juba and the immediate formation of the transitional Government of national unity. It is also important that the Government of the Republic of South Sudan suspend the implementation of the decree creating 28 states, as called for by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in its communiqué of 30-31 January 2016.

We encourage South Sudan's leaders to show their commitment to peace and to a prosperous future for the people of South Sudan through those concrete actions over the next weeks. We will use that time to support the parties in their efforts to carry out those tasks, to measure their progress and to respond appropriately.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7640

Provisional

Security Council

Seventy-first year

7640th meeting

Wednesday, 2 March 2016, 11.40 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Gaspar Martins	(Angola)
Members:	China	Mr. Zhao Yong
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. Gasso Matoses
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramirez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in Libya

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (S/2016/182)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

16-05787 (E)

Accessible document Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 11.40 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Libya

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (S/2016/182)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Libya to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Martin Kobler, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Martin Kobler, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, and Ambassador Ramlan Bin Ibrahim, Permanent Representative of Malaysia, in his capacity as the Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1970 (2011) concerning Libya.

I now give the floor to Mr. Kobler.

Mr. Kobler: First of all, let me congratulate Angola on taking up the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March.

The members of the Council have before them the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/182) on the activities of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), which details the work of the Mission over the past six months.

The process towards a democratic transition has continued to achieve a number of milestones, but at the same time remains very precarious. Two weeks ago, on 17 February, Libya marked the fifth anniversary of the 2011 revolution. However, five years on, the current political and military vacuum is allowing terrorist groups and criminal networks to establish deep roots. It must be said in all clarity that Libya today has no effective State institutions.

It is with a very heavy heart that I begin my briefing noting that the humanitarian situation in Libya has deteriorated further, against the background of poor funding for the humanitarian response plan. Libya is a country of 6 million people, with significant resources, but across the country 2.4 million people are in need of some form of humanitarian assistance. More than 40 per cent of the health-care facilities in Libya are not functioning. Over 1 million children under the age of five are at risk of being affected by a vaccine shortage. Some 1.3 million people are food insecure. It is now imperative that Libyan political actors take responsibility, in the higher interest of the Libyan people, to stop the human suffering.

The overwhelming majority of the Libyan people are in favour of the Libyan Political Agreement. The overwhelming majority support the formation of a Government of National Accord that would effectively address the existing threats. The overwhelming majority want and deserve peace now. Some of those who are politically responsible on both sides, however, still refuse to listen to the voices of the Libyan people and pursue their own narrow political interests.

In my most recent briefing to the Security Council (see S/PV.7577), I promised to broaden the basis of support for the Libyan Political Agreement. My colleagues, myself and the international community have persistently reached out to those who are opposing the Libyan Political Agreement. However, until now we have been unable to convince them to go the way of peace and unity.

On 15 January, the Presidency Council presented a Cabinet for approval by the House of Representatives. The House voted to endorse the Libyan Political Agreement in principle, which was good news, but it requested the Presidency Council to nominate a new and smaller Cabinet. After days of tireless deliberations, on 14 February the Presidency Council finalized a new list of candidates for a streamlined Cabinet. A few days ago, on 22 February, the House of Representatives met to consider the Presidency Council's second Cabinet. However, its session was interrupted by a minority of parliamentarians who opposed the vote and resorted to threats and intimidation, preventing the majority from freely expressing its vote. Nonetheless, this majority gathered 100 signatures in support of the endorsement of the new Cabinet and its programme.

I am convinced that a positive vote could have taken place on 22 February had the leadership of the House of Representatives shown the resolve and determination to put the Government of National Accord to a vote. I have therefore written to the Speaker of the House of Representatives to register the will of the democratic majority and formalize its endorsement of the Government of National Accord. Failing such recognition and a positive endorsement by the House of Representatives by early next week, Libyans have to go on. I intend to reconvene the Libyan Political Dialogue to explore the way forward in line with the Libyan Political Agreement.

Libya cannot be held hostage by minorities in the House of Representatives and the General National Congress. In both those forums, there are clear majorities who are in favour of moving ahead quickly with the establishment of a Government of National Accord. The country needs to move ahead now or risk division and collapse. I therefore intend to proceed along the following lines.

First, together with the Libyans and the international community, we will continue to advocate for the implementation of the Libyan Political Agreement. This is the plan; there are no alternatives. The Government of National Accord, as proposed by the Presidency Council, must be allowed to take up its duties in Tripoli as soon as possible. Those who are threatening the Presidency Council and actively preventing it from assuming power in Tripoli should be held accountable on the basis of Security Council resolutions. Branches of the Government, however, should be established in eastern Libya, where Benghazi requires particular attention, and in the South.

I thank Prime Minister Fayez Serraj for his perseverance and steadfastness in recent weeks. I encourage all members of the Presidency Council to stand together in unity. I call on the country's political leadership to support and stay the course outlined in the Libyan Political Agreement, and I welcome the preparatory meetings of the State Council. I look forward to the convening of the first official meeting of the State Council in Tripoli as soon as possible.

Secondly, given the security situation and the expansion of Da'esh, it is imperative to unify and reform Libyan security forces. I urge the Presidency Council and the Government of National Accord to immediately establish a mechanism to achieve that goal. The international community and UNSMIL stand ready to assist.

Thirdly, support for the Libyan Political Agreement has to be broadened. This will require a parallel, complementary and bottom-up approach. The support of civil society, youth, and women organizations has to be further deepened. Tribal dignitaries and municipalities have a crucial role to play. I intend to work with the relevant authorities responsible for national reconciliation in the new Government of National Accord to arrange for regional forums of tribal leaders and mayors to accompany the process of nation-building. This may later result in a nation-wide Grand Shura.

Fourthly, in parallel, the Constitution Drafting Assembly should present the draft constitution on time for a referendum. To this end, I am grateful that the Government of Oman has offered to host a retreat. I urge all members of the Constitution Drafting Assembly, including the boycotters, to seize this opportunity and resolve the outstanding problems.

Both in eastern and western Libya, there are those who are committed to doing everything in their power to undermine the political process, as well as the formation of a Government of National Accord and its instalment in the capital. These actors must be told in no uncertain terms that enough is enough. It is high time that they stand by the interests of the Libyan people and not against them.

With respect to security questions, while the political process is extremely slow, Da'esh takes advantage of the political and security vacuum and is expanding to the West, East and the South. While Libya's financial resources are dwindling, the criminal networks, including human smuggling, are booming. The conflict in Benghazi has escalated in recent days when forces under the banner of the Libyan national army commenced new offensive operations against the Benghazi Revolutionaries Shura Council and Da'esh. These forces have since gained control of several areas previously held by the Shura Council and succeeded in dislodging Da'esh from a number of key neighbourhoods it previously controlled. Many displaced as a result of the conflict in Benghazi have returned to their old neighbourhoods and reclaimed their homes. However, I am deeply concerned at unconfirmed reports of human rights violations in some areas overtaken by the Libyan national army.

Let us not forget that as a result of the violent conflict, significant parts of Benghazi today lie in ruins. The establishment of a humanitarian ceasefire, the delivery of humanitarian aid and a reconstruction fund for Benghazi must be priorities of the new Government. In southern Libya, the national-level conflict and absence of a functioning security apparatus continues to exacerbate local intercommunal tensions. Intermittent clashes continue in Sabha and Kufra.

The fragmentation of security actors and their preoccupation with consolidating their influence in areas under their control have allowed Da'esh to operate unchecked in many places. The airstrike against Da'esh in Sabrathah on 19 February has been followed by escalating clashes as local security forces and armed groups sought to evict Da'esh from the town. During an assault last week, Da'esh killed 17 people, beheading several of them. Da'esh has also continued to carry out multiple beheadings and atrocities in its stronghold of Sirte. Da'esh in Libya constitutes an urgent and growing threat to Libya, the region and beyond. However, the fight against violent extremism can be sustainable only if it is led by a national unity Government that puts in place and prioritizes a national agenda to address the country's most immediate challenges and works to meet the aspirations and expectations of the Libyan people.

On 13 January, the Presidency Council established a Temporary Security Committee to facilitate the implementation of the security arrangements outlined in the Libyan Political Agreement. UNSMIL is supporting the Committee in its efforts to formulate a viable security plan that will enable the Government of National Accord to establish itself in Tripoli. In western Libya, however, our efforts have been severely impeded by the consistent denials of United Nations overflight and landing permission by the Tripoli-based authorities. Since the beginning of December 2015, practically all our requests to travel to Tripoli and surrounding areas have, with few exceptions, been refused.

With respect to human rights, the Mission continues to document numerous cases in which armed groups across the country have abducted civilians on account of their identity, political affiliations or simply for ransom. Those seized are often at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. I welcome the recent establishment of a committee by the General Prosecution to review the cases of all those detained at the Mitiga airport in Tripoli.

I have continued to strongly advocate increased women's participation in Libyan political life, in particular by calling for a 30-per cent share of ministerial posts in the Government of National Accord. Sadly, my calls have not been heeded.

Libya's neighbours are suffering the direct consequences of the country's instability. I am committed to fully engaging with them in reaching a political solution to the crisis. I would like to thank Tunisia for continuing to host UNSMIL temporarily in its capital, and other countries of the region for playing an important role in building consensus. I am deeply appreciative of the efforts of the African Union, the European Union and the League of Arab States. I congratulate President Kikwete on his appointment as High Representative of the African Union for Libya. I met him a few days ago, on 26 February, and I look forward to our close cooperation. I would like to thank in particular the Council for its close engagement and unanimous support for a political resolution of the problems in Libya.

Finally, I would like to thank the staff of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya for their tireless efforts and dedication in supporting the Libyan political process. Despite the many hurdles, difficulties and frustrations in their daily work, they are highly professional and committed colleagues, and I am very grateful to them.

The President: I thank Mr. Kobler for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Ibrahim.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): In accordance with paragraph 24 (e) of resolution 1970 (2011) of 26 February 2011, I have the honour to report to the Security Council on the work of the Committee established by the same resolution. The report covers the period from 11 December 2015 to 2 March 2016.

On 11 December, the Committee wrote to the Permanent Representative of Libya, bringing to his attention a recommendation, contained in the interim report of the Panel of Experts, regarding the unity of the National Oil Corporation and the neutrality of the Central Bank of Libya.

On 21 December, the Committee responded to a request for guidance from a Member State on the implementation of the arms embargo as it relates to the disposal of seized military materiel.

On 7 January 2016, the Committee issued its fourth Implementation Assistance Notice to assist Member States in their implementation of the travel ban in relation to the Libya sanctions regime. As with the other such notices that relate to the arms embargo and the assets freeze, this notice can be found on the website of the Committee in all official languages.

On 15 January, the Committee informed the Permanent Representative of Libya about a forged document, purporting to come from the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1970 (2011) concerning Libya, and claiming the authorization of the unfreezing of frozen assets owned by the Central Bank of Libya. In this context, it is worth noting that the Central Bank of Libya has not been subject to United Nations sanctions since December 2011.

On 22 January, the Committee received a notification under paragraph 19 (b) of resolution 1970 (2011) in relation to the assets freeze measure, which was subsequently put on hold by a member of the Committee.

On 22 February, the Committee approved a request for extension of a travel ban exemption for an additional six months. Let me note in this connection that more information on granted travel ban exemptions can be found on the website of the Committee.

Lastly, on 29 January the Committee received the final report of the Panel of Experts, in accordance with resolution 2213 (2015). The Committee will discuss it and its recommendations in informal consultations tomorrow, 3 March. Via a letter dated 9 February, the Committee has also invited the Permanent Representative of Libya, or members of his delegation, to read the report in the offices of the Secretariat after the discussion in the Committee.

The President: I thank Ambassador Ibrahim for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Libya.

Mr. Dabbashi (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to be able to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I thank Mr. Martin Kobler, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his important briefing. I commend him for his determination to bring the positions of the various Libyan parties closer with the aim of speeding up implementation of the Libyan Political Agreement, signed on 17 December. I would also like to thank Ambassador Ramlan Bin Ibrahim for his presentation of the report of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1970 (2011).

Libyans have welcomed the signing of the Political Agreement, which they see as auguring well, and which has been endorsed by the House of Representatives. While we have been hoping to see the establishment of a Government of National Accord, there are spoilers who have continued to use tactics designed to derail every attempt to form such a Government, both within and outside the House of Representatives. No one can deny the fact that Libyans and the House of Representatives are positive that there is a clear majority in the House in support of the formation of a Government of National Accord under the Prime Minister-designate, Fayiz Al-Sarraj. If the House had been permitted to vote on it, the Government would now be able to carry out its functions. I hope those members of the House will reconsider their position and that the Security Council will not fail to sanction those who have stood in the way of implementation of the Political Agreement.

Unfortunately, there are Libyans who believe it is in their interest to prevent the formation of a Government of National Accord and to foment problems and discord among the country's institutions. Some think they can control and lead Libyans through the use of force. Others are trying to use the Libyan army's successes to prevent the formation of a Government, with no thought for the suffering of Libyans both inside and outside the country or the threats that surround it.

Libyans have once again shown that nothing can divide them when they know that their country is under siege. We have recently seen young patriots coming from every city to surround the city of Sabratha in western Libya in order to fight Da'esh together and to try to drive its soldiers out. They have forgotten all their previous political differences and some of them have died as martyrs alongside the residents of Sabratha in a decisive battle aimed at purging the area of terrorism. They have achieved a great deal despite the obstacles placed in their way by the local leaders, who are under the thumb of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group. I commend all the patriotic residents of the towns of Zawiyah, Serman, Ojailat, Jamil and other areas who have responded to their country's call in the absence of any support from the Government of the extremist militias in Tripoli, which instead of fighting terrorism has been aiding Da'esh and its wounded by using members of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, and has hastened to declare the city liberated from Da'esh in order to cover for Da'esh leaders who are still trying to escape, and some of whom are hiding in the capital of Tripoli.

The clashes with Da'esh in the western region of the country have shown that the militia authorities in Tripoli, which claim to constitute a Government of security, do not possess an army, and that they actually provide the basis for terrorism, since they cannot combat it. We have seen that the only regular army in Libya is made up of those units fighting terrorism in Benghazi, who have been able to liberate Ajdabiya, are working to liberate Derna and are in the Jabal Al-Gharbi region preparing to carry out orders if the vote in the body politic is blocked or if the militias prevent the Government of national accord from working in Tripoli.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Libyan army and the forces supporting it on its success in Benghazi, which for the first time in two years has enabled families that had to flee to return to their homes. It is time that the Government, with the help of the international community, put together a comprehensive plan for the reconstruction of Benghazi.

Some Libyans are opposed to the army's leadership, while others insist that they should not be interfered with, which shows clearly that all Libyans recognize that the army exists. It is therefore incumbent upon the international community to help the army to develop on a professional basis that aligns with international standards, as well as to furnish it with the equipment it needs to fight terrorism and protect the State's borders. There can be no question that establishing a programme aimed at reintegrating into the army all soldiers who have committed no crimes or human-rights violations and those fighters who wish to join the army should be the Government of National Accord's top priority and the main goal for international assistance. In that regard, I should warn against any efforts to strengthen the capacity of the militias on the pretext of helping to prepare them to fight Da'esh in Sirte. That can only have the effect of complicating the Libyan crisis even more, particularly in view of the fact that since the fight began we have seen the militias retreat from Sirte and put it back in the hands of Da'esh.

It will be difficult to unite Libyans in the effort to fight and eliminate terrorism in the country if we continue to ignore the fact that elements of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group and the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya are supporting and protecting Da'esh. They are allies of the Islamic State and have provided them with weapons and financing. They have made it possible for them to control Sirte and Derna and some areas of Benghazi. They have also made it possible to establish pockets of control in other Libyan cities.

Therefore, the time has come to ask those who use religion as a slogan to say something we have never heard from them before, namely, the condemnation of Da'esh and Ansar Al-Sharia. They must declare that they are not linked to the ideology of Al-Qaida or Da'esh, or at least that they have rejected it. They must accept what Libyans agree upon with regard to the sponsorship of the United Nations and accept the national State and respect the institutions and symbols of democracy, the rule of law and equality among all Libyans. They must demonstrate this in fact so that Libyans can believe them, trust them, vote for them and integrate them in the conduct of the affairs of the State. Otherwise, Libyans will remain suspicious of those two organizations.

No force will be able to impose its authority on the Libyan people. Over the past four years, terrorist organizations have controlled the levers of the State. Unfortunately, they are sowing division among Libyans and encouraging them to kill each other. They do so by using two television channels — Al Nabaa and Tanasoh — to disseminate propaganda. If the international community is serious about resolving the Libyan crisis, it must prevent the broadcasting of those two television channels and punish those responsible. It is worth noting that the Tanasoh channel is broadcasted from the United Kingdom and that its owner holds British nationality, while one of its main officials is a Canadian mufti of Libyan origin.

During the 11 February meeting on sanctions (see S/PV.7620), I referred to the losses suffered by Libya because the Board of the Libyan Investment Authority was unable to manage the country's investments. We have been in consultations with members of the Board to determine what measures need to be adopted to prevent losses without lifting the assets freeze. We feel that Council members understand this problem and we hope that itwill lead to a draft resolution to be adopted soon by the Security Council.

Libyans aspire to a Government that unites them, manages their affairs, provides them with security and basic services and makes it possible for them to return to their homes. Their hopes are based on the establishment of the Government of National Accord, which is working out of Tripoli. We hope that Special Representative of the Secretary-General Kobler will be able to help Lybians achieve their goals with the Council's assistance. But it is up to Libyans to set aside their political alliances and join together to confront the greatest danger, namely, terrorism and the possibility of a break-up of the State and a division of the territory.

The President: I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.

United Nations
S/PV.7641

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7641st meeting

Thursday, 3 March 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Gaspar Martins	(Angola)
Members:	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Mahmoud
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Yoshikawa
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Senegal	Mr. Barro
	Spain	Mr. García-Larrache
	Ukraine	Mr. Ilnytskyi
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

Accessible document
Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Yemen to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. O'Brien, who is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Brussels.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien: The conflict in Yemen continues unabated since my latest briefing (see S/PV.7622) to the Security Council, on 16 February. By far the most pressing concern today is the protection of civilians, millions of whom daily face relentless, and often indiscriminate, bombing and shelling of urban areas by the parties to the conflict. That was again made starkly clear on Saturday, 27 February, when approximately 30 people were killed and 40 injured in an apparent air strike on a busy market in the Nahem district of Sana'a governorate. Six children were among those killed in the attack. That was one of four air strikes in Nahem during February that reportedly killed civilians. More than 2,000 children are estimated to have been killed or injured since the start of the conflcit — including at least 90 children killed this year alone — by airstrikes, shelling, ground fighting and unexploded ordnance.

Protected places, such as hospitals, schools and homes, continue to be hit by all parties. On 24 February, coalition air strikes reportedly hit a health centre in Bidbadah district, Marib governorate, completely destroying the facility. On 1 March, airstrikes reportedly landed within 20 metres of a hospital in Sa'ada. I reiterate my previous calls: air strikes and random shelling of civilians and civilian areas violate cardinal rules of international humanitarian law and constitute unlawful conduct of hostilities. All parties to the conflict have an obligation under international humanitarian law to take every measure to ensure that civilians and civilian objects are protected. It is unacceptable that health facilities are being hit, and it is critical that the parties make guarantees that those locations will be protected.

In the absence of a political, negotiated end to the conflict, the security situation across much of the country is rapidly deteriorating. In Aden, regular attacks by parties — including Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, the so-called Aden and Abyan branch of the Islamic State and local militants — take place against security personnel and other segments of the Government of Yemen. Those attacks and the general lawlessness in Aden have prevented the United Nations from redeploying international staff there since October 2015, thereby directly impacting our ability to assess needs and monitor response. Intense fighting around Sana'a, Marib, Ta'izz and Sa'ada also restrict our ability to deliver assistance where it is needed most.

The proliferation of checkpoints across the country further impedes humanitarian action, slowing the transport of key goods and services and in some instances halting movement altogether. Command-and-control lines within armed groups are often tenuous, with agreements and guarantees reached at the national level not necessarily communicated downstream to the individuals at checkpoints. Despite permission to move, trucks are often held up and sometimes delayed for days or even weeks.

Bureaucratic requirements imposed by Houthi authorities also delay and impede the rapid delivery of humanitarian assistance. In one week alone in February, the Ministry of the Interior in Sana'a refused travel permission to three separate United Nations-led missions from Sana'a to Ibb and Ta'izz. Increasingly, the movement of United Nations security staff into and out of the country is also being made difficult, having a direct impact on our ability to expand operations. Of particular concern, however, is the fact that for over three months the World Food Programme (WFP), together with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and UNICEF, have been trying to conduct an emergency food security and nutrition assessment throughout the country. Originally intended to be launched in October 2015, the assessment continues to be blocked by authorities in Sana'a. This assessment is critically needed in order to update information on food security and nutrition to inform humanitarian response.

Let me therefore remind all parties that providing timely and unimpeded access to humanitarian organizations is not only the fundamental prerequisite to any meaningful humanitarian response, but also an obligation under international humanitarian law. I call upon the Council to request all parties, in no uncertain terms, to stop any denial of access and facilitate life-saving needs immediately.

Despite these challenges, United Nations agencies and partners continue to deliver assistance, often at gave risk, across all sectors. In February, for example, over 3 million people received WFP food assistance — some 400,000 more than the month before. The humanitarian community remains committed to expanding its overall response to 13.4 million people this year in Yemen. To achieve this, the Yemen humanitarian response plan for 2016 appeals for $1.8 billion.

On 12 February, the Secretary-General instituted the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM) at the request of the Government of Yemen. The Mechanism, based in Djibouti, is intended to expedite legitimate commercial imports of critical commodities such as food, fuel and medicines. All States and relevant organizations, including the International Maritime Organization, have since been notified of the Mechanism's procedures. The nominations for the UNVIM tripartite steering committee consisting of a representative of the Government of Yemen, the coalition and the United Nations will be finalized this week, allowing the full commencement of UNVIM operations.

In recent months there has been a significant increase of the delivery of fuel and other life-saving imports through Yemeni ports, and it is critical that every effort be made by all Member States directly concerned to encourage, and not hinder, that trend. It is imperative that imports to Yemen and trading within Yemen be allowed to continue. I call on all parties to ensure the protection of civilian infrastructure, including shipping ports and associated equipment.

I am also pleased to report that the WFP chartered vessel, the *Mainport Cedar*, which had been diverted and taken by the coalition to the Saudi port of Jizan, was released on 25 February. Humanitarian food and medical supplies were subsequently delivered, as planned, to Hudaydah. The humanitarian information technology equipment will be delivered to Aden on 6 March

Once again, I underscore the urgent need for the Council and the international community more broadly to impress upon the parties to the conflict their obligations to take greater measures to protect civilians and to facilitate unconditional and sustained access to all parts of Yemen. I also ask the Council to press the parties to resume peace talks and agree to a cessation of hostilities.

The President: I thank Mr. O'Brien for his briefing.

I give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Alyemany (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to express my sincere thanks to all States members of the Security Council for their ongoing interest in Yemen and their close follow-up of the political settlement process and the humanitarian situation in my country. I also thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his acute attention to the Yemeni crisis, as maintained by his Special Envoy to my country, Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, and his team. I further thank the international humanitarian community, represented by Mr. Stephen O'Brien.

We reiterate the readiness of the Yemeni Government to participate in talks with the putschist Houthis and Saleh at any time and anywhere in order to stem the bloodshed and achieve peace in Yemen. We demonstrated that readiness by attending the Basel talks in December 2015, where an agreement was reached on a number of points related to detainees, emergency assistance and other humanitarian issues. A venue was identified for new talks on 14 January, but the rebels blocked all efforts to that end and failed to meet their commitments with respect to confidence-building measures. They did not participate in the January consultations and are procrastinating in setting a new date.

We express our strong support for the Special Envoy and stress the importance of the international community's support for his efforts. That is the only path to peace in my country, in accordance with the Gulf initiative, the outcome of the National Dialogue Conference, resolution 2216 (2015) and the consultations endorsed in Basel in December.

Despite a significant improvement in the humanitarian situation in my country, particularly in the areas liberated from the putschist militias, the humanitarian needs of my people remain vast, especially in regions under the control of the militias. The war imposed by the putschist militas, the Houthis and Saleh — which have plunged the country into utter chaos and destruction in order to achieve their cynical political objectives by force — have exacerbated humanitarian conditions that were already poor before the attempt to overthrow the Government. The Houthis and Saleh continue to target civilians and civilian neighbourhoods. Ta'izz governorate and its people continue to be systematically attacked. Katyusha rockets and artillery shells are aimed at civilian areas and innocent civilians. The militias have besieged the city for more than four months, targeting hospitals and medical infrastructure and preventing the delivery of the most basic emergency supplies, such as oxygen, food and water.

The situation is now on the verge of becoming a major health catastrophe. As the militias have closed in on the city over the past 10 months, more than 1 million people have been displaced to rural areas. And now, because of this continuing siege by the militias, the spectre of starvation has arisen in the rural areas hosting displaced people.

As we thank the organizations that have continued to work to reach those in need in Ta'izz, the Houthis continue to hamper the delivery of such assistance to the needy. The World Food Programme (WFP) has stated that it has been able to deliver food assistance to 3,000 families in Ta'izz, which represents approximately 18,000 people if we count six individuals per family. This is a very limited number when compared with the number of the actual needy — over 1.2 million people inside the besieged city alone. This number is escalating, particularly when we note the harsh humanitarian conditions in host communities resulting from the militia war. Furthermore, the WFP has stated that it has not been able to distribute any assistance in some areas of Ta'izz.

The putschist militias are acting like war criminals. They are using starvation as a weapon of war against my people in every province under their control. The Houthi militias continue to spread death everywhere. Antipersonnel mines have been planted around cities, on major roads and subsidiary roads, and this has slowed down the delivery of any humanitarian assistance to a number of regions.

The Houthi militias and the Saleh forces continue to detain humanitarian activists who have only been attempting to help their brethren in many cities. An example was the targeting of a tanker carrying water to Ibb governorate to aid those under siege in Ta'izz. Activists were detained and beaten. Sana'a is suffering terribly. The Houthis militias and the Saleh forces continue to loot assistance convoys going to Sana'a, Amran, Hajjah and Saada and are selling those goods on the black market.

This situation has only prolonged the suffering of our people. What is truly strange is that international organizations are reluctant to name those who are looting humanitarian assistance. We know that this is a widespread phenomenon; it is not limited. I would put the responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the international community because it has failed to condemn this blackmail and looting by the putschist militias that have stripped the Yemeni State of all its resources and are attempting to take us back to the dark ages with their sectarian discourse.

With the assistance of our brethren, notably the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, represented in the King Salman Centre for Humanitarian Aid, the Emirati and Qatari Red Crescent organizations, and many other humanitarian organizations from the Gulf acting in my country, we have attempted to return to a normal economic life with regular commercial activity. In early August 2015, the Yemeni Government agreed with the United Nations and alliance forces to set up the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM) and operationalize it. On 24 February, the Government of Yemen appointed its representative to the steering committee of UNVIM, and we stated our position on the location of the headquarters of UNVIM. The Government had agreed with the United Nations that the headquarters would be in the city of Aden, following its liberation from the Houthi forces. Previously, there had been an agreement for UNVIM to be based in Jeddah, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. We were therefore very surprised when the headquarters were moved to Djibouti without even consulting the Yemeni Government. We strongly objected to that because it breached our agreement with the United Nations.

The putschist forces continue to target our children, the rights of our children and future generations in Yemen. More and more children are being recruited to Houthi militias. This threatens future generations in areas still under the control of the putschist militias. The recruitment of children and the brainwashing of children with religious and sectarian extremist ideologies are a time bomb. The Security Council must act to defuse it in due time through implementing relevant United Nations resolutions which have clearly addressed this issue.

Before concluding, I would express the wish that the Security Council will continue consulting with the Yemeni Government and its Permanent Mission here in New York on any negotiations or consultations on any Security Council output on the humanitarian situation in Yemen. We wish such outputs to echo the screams of our children, our suffering, including Fareed Shawky, who is dying in Ta'izz under siege. I would ask the Council to kindly say to those Houthi killers and the Saleh forces to stop killing the dreams of my people and free them to build a democratic State.

The President: I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussions on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.

United Nations

S/PV.7642

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7642nd meeting

Thursday, 10 March 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Gaspar Martins	(Angola)
Members:	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Minami
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

United Nations peacekeeping operations

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

Accessible document
Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

United Nations peacekeeping operations

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of India, Pakistan and Rwanda to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Atul Khare, Under-Secretary-General for Field Support, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to very warmly welcome the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and I give him the floor.

The Secretary-General: I thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to brief the Council on the important steps being taken and the measures being put in place to end the exploitation and abuse of vulnerable people by the United Nations personnel sent to protect them.

For many people caught up in poverty and conflict around the world, the United Nations represents their final hope for a better future. When sexual exploitation and abuse are perpetrated against these individuals by the United Nations personnel authorized to protect them, it further victimizes and violates them and inflicts untold harm on already fragile communities. It undermines the trust between the United Nations and its beneficiaries, betrays the values and principles that the United Nations purports to advance, and tarnishes the credibility of United Nations peacekeeping operations and the United Nations as a whole. The impact is not limited to the location of the abuse, but reflects on the efforts of tens of thousands of peacekeepers and civilian staff working tirelessly to save lives and protect people around the world in difficult and often dangerous conditions.

In June 2015, I, like the Council, was deeply dismayed by allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse of children by foreign military forces in the Central African Republic and the United Nations response to those allegations. In that context, I appointed a high-level external independent review panel on sexual exploitation and abuse by international peacekeeping forces in the Central African Republic. The panel was led by Justice Marie Deschamps, with two other eminent persons. In mid-December 2015, the Panel submitted its report, which depicted a United Nations that uncovered the abuses but failed to respond meaningfully and with the speed, care or sensitivity required.

A number of the panel's recommendations are already being implemented, while those that have far-reaching implications or that require action by legislative bodies, Member States and partners are being considered. Given the importance of addressing the systemic weaknesses that the panel's report exposes, I have appointed a Special Coordinator, Ms. Jane Holl Lute. Ms. Lute will support me in reviewing and advancing the implementation of the panel's recommendations and in strengthening our response to such abuse.

Let me turn to my latest annual report to the General Assembly on special measures on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (A/70/729). The report shows an increase in the number of new allegations in 2015, with a total of 99 for the United Nations system. Sixty-nine of those allegations were lodged against United Nations personnel serving in peace operations. That reflects an increase in allegations within United Nations peacekeeping operations, with multiple allegations against the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and increases in allegations from the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. Further allegations have continued to come to light this year.

In the face of that disturbing trend across a number of our peacekeeping operations, it is imperative that our collective response be more effective. My report proposes strong new initiatives in three key areas: first, ending impunity; secondly, helping and supporting victims; and thirdly, strengthening accountability, including through action by Member States.

First and foremost, to end impunity, greater transparency is critical. This year for the first time, my report names the countries of alleged perpetrators. Country-specific information is publicly available on the website of the Conduct and Discipline Unit of the

Department of Field Support. I intend to expand that information to cover all outstanding allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, including the status of referrals for criminal accountability. That will hold accountable and enable the United Nations and Member States to address every allegation of sexual exploitation or abuse in a thorough and timely manner through proper investigation and just punishment.

Secondly, the victims, many of whom are children, need our protection and support. We are finalizing the establishment of a trust fund that will provide them with the medical, psychosocial and legal services that they need. I have asked Member States to approve the transfer to the trust fund of payments that will be withheld in substantiated cases of sexual exploitation and abuse. I encourage Member States to make voluntary contributions to the fund. I have also urged all troop- and police-contributing countries to designate paternity focal points. We will follow up vigorously to ensure that children who are born as a result of these terrible abuses receive the support they need. Member States must also consider how they will respond to claims from victims who pursue legal action to seek redress.

Thirdly, accountability demands the conduct of solid investigations that can withstand judicial scrutiny in disciplinary and criminal proceedings. That will require developing uniformly high standards of investigation. It will entail building the capacities of immediate response teams to gather and preserve evidence. All investigations should be concluded within six months at most, with the most urgent cases concluded within three months. I urge Member States to adopt this standard.

I also urge Member States to cooperate with the Office of Internal Oversight Services in the conduct of investigations. I am strongly committed to monitoring accountability for violations. Where appropriate, that will include taking action up to and including the repatriation of commanders or of whole contingents. We have already put that into practice in repatriating troops serving in the Central African Republic, owing to alleged sexual exploitation and abuse. When I requested the resignation of my Special Representative for MINUSCA in August 2015, I further signalled that the Organization would hold itself accountable for such violations. I will also consider ending the deployment of uniformed personnel from specific Member States if there is prima facie evidence of widespread or systemic exploitation and abuse.

Accountability demands that Member States live up to their responsibility to bring to justice those who have committed crimes while serving with the United Nations. We expect them to impose sanctions commensurate with the seriousness of the offence. I have asked Member States to establish on-site court martial proceedings and to ensure that domestic legislation applies to sex crimes committed by their nationals while they are serving within United Nations peace operations. I have also called for the collection of samples of the DNA of alleged offenders.

We also continue to emphasize prevention. Significantly, this year for the first time, we will be able to vet all uniformed personnel for previous allegations of misconduct while in the service of the United Nations. We are increasing our support for predeployment training by Member States. We will also consider imposing new rules to curtail the social activities of peacekeeping contingents, including by designating certain geographical areas as out-of-bounds.

(*spoke in French*)

Those efforts constitute an important step forward towards ending such crimes and the terrible suffering they inflict on their victims. We can ensure the implementation of the principle of accountability, and in particular criminal accountability, only if the troop- and police-contributing countries quickly and carefully investigate such allegations and if the responsible parties are duly punished. The United Nations is firmly determined to work with Member States to ensure that national judiciary proceedings make it possible to implement the principle of accountability and to fight impunity.

(*spoke in English*)

This is a global issue. It is not confined to any one region, mission or nation. I am determined that the United Nations must lead by example. Sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel demand nothing less than decisive and bold action. I am committed to working with Member States to confront that criminal conduct and to justify the trust of the people we serve to ensure that this Organization remains a beacon of hope for the most vulnerable.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his important briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing today, for the important report upon which it is based (A/70/729), and for his determined leadership in tackling what he has rightly called a cancer in our system. We know that he has faced considerable push-back against his efforts to bring to light these horrific abuses and to ensure that those responsible are held accountable, and we thank him for holding firm.

Let me begin by reading out a quote,

> "The Security Council is deeply concerned with the allegations of sexual misconduct by United Nations peacekeeping personnel... The Security Council... recognizes the shared responsibility of the Secretary-General and all Member States to take every measure within their purview to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse by all categories of personnel in United Nations peacekeeping missions to enforce United Nations standards of conduct in that regard.
>
> The Security Council reiterates the importance of ensuring that sexual exploitation and abuse are properly investigated and appropriately punished." (*S/PV.5191, p.7*)

Those words were spoken in this Chamber nearly 11 years ago, in May 2005, by the Security Council President at the time. She was speaking on behalf of the Council at its first-ever meeting on the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations peacekeepers. Like today's, that meeting was convened following the release of a report commissioned by the Secretary-General at that time, Kofi Annan, in order to lay out a strategy for eliminating the scourge of such abuses in peacekeeping operations. The report (see A/59/710), as many of us here know, followed a series of disturbing allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse in 2004, not unlike those that have surfaced since last year.

Yet as we all know, despite the commitment made by the Council over a decade ago to address this problem, the scourge of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers persists. According to the report released by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon last week, 69 allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse were levied against uniformed and civilian personnel serving in peacekeeping missions last year. That represents a 20 per cent increase in reported violations from the previous year. More than half of the allegations concerning peacekeeping operations involve the rape or sexual abuse of children. And those are just the cases we know about. As Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, who took over as Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) last August, has said, the cases reported are likely to be just the tip of the iceberg.

We have long known that one of the most effective ways to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse is to send a clear message that perpetrators will be held accountable, so it is deeply alarming that, according to the Secretary-General's report, out of 69 allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse in 2015, in only 17 instances were investigations completed by January 31 2016 — 17 out of 69 — and in only one of those cases did a country report to the United Nations that it had punished a perpetrator in response to a substantiated allegation. The perpetrator in that case was found to have engaged in a sexually exploitative relationship. As punishment, he was suspended for nine whole days.

Some have argued that this discussion has no place in the Security Council, implying that they do not think that sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers have an impact on international peace and security. They are mistaken. In addition to being a heinous abuse, sexual exploitation and abuse erode the discipline of military and police units and undermine the confidence of local communities in peacekeepers, both of which are critical to fulfilling Security Council mandates. More broadly, when those entrusted with being protectors become perpetrators, it undermines the credibility of peacekeeping missions everywhere, as well as the legitimacy of the United Nations writ large. And along with that, it undermines our ability to address effectively the serious threats of our time.

I have listened really hard to those who think that the Council has no role to play in overseeing discussions about what we do next to curb sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers, but I have to say that I honestly do not understand the argument. I do not. It is the Council that sends peacekeepers into conflict areas because we believe that their presence is essential to promoting international peace and security. We deem it our responsibility as a Council to oversee every part of their missions — how many soldiers and police officers to send, what their mandate is, when they can use force — and we give them clear mandates to protect civilians.

So let me pose my question to the skeptics this way. When Governments attack civilians, it is our job; when armed groups and non-State actors attack civilians, it is our job; when terrorists attack civilians, it is our job. So why in the world, when the United Nations own peacekeepers are the ones attacking civilians — when peacekeepers commit the sickening of crime of raping children — is it someone else's job? Can anyone explain that? Why is that the exception? The Security Council cannot have responsibility for protecting civilians against all threats from all forces except those whom we directly oversee.

As we all know, a crucial part of accountability is transparency. The United Nations, its Member States and the Security Council need to know when soldiers and police officers are accused of abusing the privilege of wearing the blue helmet. We need to know whether those allegations are being adequately investigated and, where appropriate, punished. And victims and their communities need to know that justice is being served. Let us imagine if it was a member of our own family. Yet the opaqueness of the existing system has made it virtually impossible for any of us to know these things. All to often, we do not know whether investigations have been opened, and even when we know that investigations are ongoing we do not know whether they are being carried out promptly, thoroughly or impartially.

Without basic facts, it is impossible to enforce a zero-tolerance policy. It is no coincidence that we have had a zero-tolerance policy for a long time, and yet sexual exploitation and abuse allegations have risen. That is not a coincidence. There is not sufficient accountability to our own policy. Louis Brandeis, one of the most eloquent justices who ever served on the United States Supreme Court, once said that "[s]unlight is said to be the best of disinfectants". Yet allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers are too often allowed to remain in the darkness, where the rot they cause continues to spread, to the detriment of the entire enterprise of peacekeeping.

That is why it is so important that the Secretary-General's report brings to light, for the first time, the nationality of the personnel who face credible allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, and it is why we commend the United Nations for starting to post on its website new allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, including the date on which the report was received, information about the nationality of the accused, and whether the alleged victims are minors. It is through such reporting that we know that, in the first three months of this year, 26 additional allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse have been reported. That is a horrifying number.

We can and must do more to shine a bright light on this enduring problem. A place to start would be providing additional information on the status of investigations. For example, while we know that the majority of investigations into allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse from 2015 are pending, we do not know when those investigations were opened. This data is crucial for gauging whether countries are acting in a timely manner.

Some countries have adamantly opposed this push for greater transparency, in particular the practice of identifying the nationality of peacekeepers credibly alleged to have committed such abuses. They claim that it unfairly singles out troop- and police-contributing countries that are putting their personnel at risk in some of the most difficult environments around the world. We commend the service of those troop- and police-contributing countries. Let me be very clear. The vast majority of the 91,000 troops and 13,000 police officers in United Nations peacekeeping missions serve honourably and with courage, putting their lives on the line every day to protect people in countries very far from their own. They neither commit sexual abuse nor do they turn a blind eye to it. And most troop-contributing countries are serious about holding to account soldiers and police officers from their forces who would perpetrate such abuses, recognizing that impunity for sexual exploitation and abuse undermines the effectiveness of their troop contingents as a whole, whether they are serving in a United Nations mission or any other mission.

Yet the fact that so many — the vast majority — serve so honourably is all the more reason why troop- and police-contributing countries should want to bring these cases to light, investigate them, and hold accountable those who have committed abuses.

Those serving honourably are the ones who have the greatest incentive to prevent the sickening acts of a few from tarnishing the noble service of so many. When peacekeepers commit sexual exploitation and abuse with impunity, the fault lies not only with the peacekeepers who commit those deplorable acts, the commanders who look the other way or the countries that fail to conduct proper investigations. The blame rests on all of us, including the countries that fail to adequately train peacekeepers to prevent and root out these problems, the Member States that fail to press troop- and police-contributing countries to hold perpetrators accountable, and the United Nations institutions that fail to report on the magnitude of the problem or repatriate units when countries prove unable or unwilling to investigate credible allegations of abuse. This is an all-systems failure.

Let me just give just one example. According to the United Nations, there were seven separate allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by peacekeepers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in a single mission, MINUSCA. One allegation was reported in January, one in February, four in August and one more in September. The majority of the alleged victims of the abuses were kids. As the allegations continued to add up, members of the Council, including the United States, pushed for the repatriation of the unit. In the meantime, more and more victims continued to come forward. In January of this year there were three more credible allegations of sexual violence and abuse against the same unit, followed by five more in February. Think about that: eight credible allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse reported against a single group of peacekeepers in just two months — in seven of those instances the alleged victims were children. How could we let that happen? All of us. How could we let that happen?

In late February, the entire contingent from the Democratic Republic of the Congo was repatriated — the first time the United Nations had ever repatriated an entire contingent for sexual exploitation and abuse. It was the right thing to do. It sends a clear message to all countries that there will be consequences for failing to address this serious problem. But it should never have taken so long. The Security Council was told the contingent would be repatriated, but the repatriation was delayed for operational reasons. That is unacceptable. The experience should force us all to ask: What if those soldiers had been sent home sooner? How many kids could have been spared suffering unspeakable violations that no child should ever have to endure, and that they will have to carry with them for the rest of their lives?

We have to do better by these victims. That means not only securing justice, but also ensuring that they receive the care they need and deserve in the aftermath of such crimes, both in the short term and in the long term. The Secretary-General has proposed a trust fund to support special services for victims that will withold payments from repatriated individuals and direct the funds to victims. We should move swiftly together to create that fund.

In conclusion, let me share the story of one of those alleged victims, a 14-year-old girl who lives in Bambari, in the Central African Republic. She recently told a human rights organization that, in December 2015, she was walking along a path near a peacekeeper base when she was accosted by an armed soldier whose uniform she recognized as one worn by peacekeepers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. She said,

> "He slapped me in the face and made me continue to walk on the path. Then he ripped off my clothes and used them to tie my hands behind my back. He threw me on the ground, placed his gun to the side and got on top of me to rape me. When he was done, he just left. I had to put my clothes on, and I went home."

In 2005, the author of the Secretary-General's first report (see A/59/710) on this problem, Prince Zeid, who of course is now the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, warned the Council here in the Chamber that sexual exploitation and abuse

> "would carry with it the most serious consequences for the future of peacekeeping if we were to prove ourselves incapable of solving [the] problem." (*S/PV.5191, p. 4*)

The same holds true to this day, and the profound consequences of failing to solve this problem — for peacekeeping missions, for the United Nations and for so many individuals like that 14-year-old girl in Bambari — continue to add up. We knew how to fix the problem then, and we know how to fix the problem now. We cannot wait any longer. The United Nations has presented a Security Council draft resolution to take our responsibility to address this grave issue as an immediate step. We urge all Council members to support it.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China wishes to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. We also thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing.

Since their inception, United Nations peacekeeping operations have played a significant role in maintaining international peace and security. To date, hundreds of thousands of peacekeepers, from more than 120 countries, have participated in 69 peacekeeping missions. More than 3,000 peacekeepers made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. They deserve to be inscribed in our memories forever.

While United Nations peacekeepers have made an enormous contribution, a handful of them are suspected of having commmitted sexual exploitation and abuse in some countries. Such acts have seriously undermined the reputation of peacekeeping operations, runs counter to the purpose of those operations and seriously tarnishes the overall image of the United Nations. China supports the Secretary-General and the Secretariat in pursuit of a zero-tolerance policy for peacekeepers involved in sexual exploitation and abuse. And we support the international community in adopting counter-measures.

First, the international community should pay great attention to the problem and combat it resolutely. The parties concerned should attach great importance to the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers, in the interest of safeguarding the reputation and credibility of the United Nations and guaranteeing the healthy development of peacekeeping operations. The Security Council and other organs, including the Secretariat, troop-contributing countries (TCCs) and the States concerned, should strengthen cooperation, fully implement the zero-tolerance policy, resolutely combat sexual exploitation and abuse, never condone such acts, bring perpetrators to account and deliver justice to victims.

Secondly, the international community should adopt an integrated policy that combines punishment and prevention. Merely pursuing prosecution after the fact cannot fundamentally resolve the problem. The parties concerned should attach importance to boosting prevention efforts and seek to eradicate the underlying causes of sexual exploitation and abuse. It is important to analyse the various conditions that give rise to sexual exploitation and abuse. At every key link in the deployment of peacekeeping operations, comprehensive measures should be taken to prevent and respond to such acts. There is also a need to raise awareness among peacekeepers about the need to uphold discipline and respect the law, as well as to strengthen administration and management to ensure that sexual exploitation and abuse constitutes a red line that must never be crossed.

Thirdly, there is a need to improve management and raise standards. The Secretariat bears important responsibility for improving and strengthening the deployment of peacekeeping operations. It must further deepen the reform of peacekeeping operations and, by formulating norms and guidelines for peacekeepers, comprehensively upgrade deployment standards and the management of peacekeeping operations, strengthen communication with affected countries and TCCs with a view to ensuring that every peacekeeper deployed in a mission area adheres to ethical standards, strictly follows the law, maintains discipline and respects local populations.

Fourthly, capacity-building for TCCs must be strengthened. TCCs bear the primary responsibility for the acts of the peacekeepers they deploy. They must strengthen predeployment training to ensure that peacekeepers are well disciplined and able to carry out their mandates. The parties concerned must also pay attention to the actual difficulties facing TCCs, especially those from the developing world. They must also scale up assistance in the area of peacekeeping and comprehensively boost capacity-building in those countries. The international community needs to strengthen its cooperation with TCCs through bilateral, multilateral and regional organizations and provide them with technical assistance, such as training for personnel, and comprehensively upgrade the quality of their personnel at the level of management, as well as the overall capacity of peacekeeping operations.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I am very grateful to the Secretary-General for his urgency in bringing this issue to the Security Council and for his briefing today.

For nearly 70 years, the pale blue helmets of United Nations peacekeepers have been synonymous with the work of the United Nations. In the 16 missions ongoing today, and in the 54 that came before, each and every peacekeeper presents the human face of the Organization and the principles we stand for. In upholding those principles, many have paid the ultimate price. At the outset, I would like to pay tribute to the 3,444 peacekeepers who lost their lives since 1948, including 104 from my own country. We all know why their sacrifice was needed. Peacekeeping, by definition, can be dangerous. It is the preservation of international security — not in word, but in deed. In the midst of conflict and chaos, peacekeepers bring safety and hope to those most in need, to those in the darkest moments of their lives.

To fulfil that crucial role, peacekeepers need the trust of those they seek to protect. When a girl looks up to a Blue Helmet, she should do so not in fear, but in hope. Every time that a peacekeeper fails to live up to our principles or fails to uphold the integrity and decency that is expected of the United Nations, that trust is undermined.

Today we have heard about the worst abuse of trust imaginable — the sickening actions of a small number of individuals now threaten the reputation of the entire United Nations. Such actions are a horrific betrayal of the faith placed in the United Nations by the very people in need of protection, people who have already suffered the trauma of conflicts. Those crimes truly are a cancer in our system.

The stories that have emerged from the Central African Republic are harrowing. We cannot shy away from them. We cannot hide behind an acronym. This is not "SEA". It is abuse. It is exploitation. It is women and girls being raped and manipulated for sex. For too long that has existed in the shadows, in rumours and speculation, concealed by incompetence and, yes, by conspiracy. Today we have brought overdue light to this darkness, we now need to prove that we will never let it happen again. We all have a role to play in that. We cannot pretend that this is a matter just for other countries. When our collective reputation is threatened, collective action is needed.

Ahead of their deployments to South Sudan and Somalia, all troops from the United Kingdom will be vetted rigorously and receive robust predeployment training covering sexual exploitation and abuse. I hope all troop contributing countries will do the same.

The United Nations system must also bear its share of responsibility. We welcome the Secretary-General's decisiveness in withdrawing units facing credible allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. We support his prerogative to name and shame countries that contribute those units, and we fully support the appointment of Jane Holl Lute as Special Coordinator on the United Nations response to this terrible scourge.

But this is just the start. The coming months will need to see bold United Nations reforms. Those must include designing a system for reporting allegations that is trusted by host communities. When allegations are proven, the United Nations must act quickly and decisively, and well within the Secretary-General's suggested six-month deadline.

The United Kingdom has committed funds to assist the United Nations and the Special Coordinator in these efforts this year. Some of that money will be spent rebuilding much-needed trust in communities hosting peacekeepers. I hope that other Member States will join us in committing financial support too.

The world is watching us today. Let us be clear: this cannot continue; this must not continue. The report (A/70/729) of the Secretary-General is a wake-up call that simply cannot be ignored. It is a call for all of us to do everything in our power to protect those in our collective care. The reputation of peacekeepers, of the Security Council and of the United Nations is at stake. The Council has a clear responsibility to ensure accountability and to take action. I hope we can adopt the Security Council draft resolution under negotiation in the coming days. That will be a valuable step forward, but it cannot be our last.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing on issues of discipline and behaviour in peacekeeping operations.

We attach great importance to the work on the problem of the commission of violations, including sexual abuse by members of United Nations peacekeeping contingents, as well as United Nations staff members. We believe that the United Nations and its Member States must take all possible measures to prevent and fully put an end to such actions.

No less disturbing is the information regarding the flagrant cases of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by foreign non-United Nations troops deployed in conflict regions with the consent of the Security Council. Those contingents, like the Blue Helmets, should bring peace and security to those States. We categorically reject the provision of any privileges to those forces over the staff of United Nations missions. There must be a single set of standards for all in combating that evil.

Problems related to discipline in United Nations operations on the ground are not new. For many years, it has been discussed in the General Assembly in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and in the Fifth and Sixth Committees. Preventive and proactive measures are also included in resolutions regularly adopted by the General Assembly, under the heading of "Criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on missions". Very often, with active participation by the General Assembly, the practice of preliminary training and induction courses for staff has been introduced, which is implemented by States together with peacekeeping operations and special political missions. Those measures are already yielding tangible results.

We believe that the involvement of all Member States in the process of establishing measures will determine the effectiveness of their implementation in practice. The key role lies with the troop-contributing countries of United Nations peacekeeping operations, which possess comprehensive information on the reasons we are unable to reduce and eliminate those shameful statistics.

Although we continue to believe that issues of peacekeeping discipline are not related to the maintenance of international peace and security, the Russian delegation showed great understanding from the very beginning for the United States initiative to strengthen the message of the unacceptability of sexual abuse by United Nations contingents under the aegis of the Security Council. At the same time, the draft resolution that has been circulated is far from ideal. It proposes a selective approach by excluding from the proposed measures both United Nations civilian personnel and non-United Nations personnel.

At the same time, as a result of ongoing negotiations in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping on that very topic, it would simply be wrong to set the Council against the General Assembly. While in no way do we minimize the seriousness of the sexual exploitation and abuse that we are discussing today, we would like to note that the collective responsibility for such actions proposed by the Secretary-General and a number of States raises questions. From our point of view, the focus should be on efforts made in good faith to find specific perpetrators, determine their guilt and have them stand trial.

A separate important task is taking steps to prevent such crimes and ensuring appropriate training and vetting of military and civilian personnel deployed in peacekeeping operations. The main burden there in cases related to troops and police is borne by troop-contributing countries. In the case of civilian personnel, the responsibility lies with the Secretariat. In that regard, we see no grounds for mentorship of Member States by the Secretariat. Among its ranks, there can also be people who are equally guilty.

At the same time, unfortunately, there remains the question of what to do with foreign contingents that have Security Council mandates to conduct operations to facilitate the resolution of conflict situations with the expectation that the operations will be carried out in good faith. We believe that cases of sexual exploitation and abuse by such forces should be thoroughly investigated by contributing countries and those found guilty must be brought to justice. There can be no impunity here. Otherwise, the Security Council will sooner or later have to consider the issue of withdrawing such authority from them.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of my country reiterates its categorical condemnation of sexual exploitation and abuse. Egypt also reiterates that it is important that Member States take the necessary measures to combat these crimes and eliminate them completely. The necessary efforts to help victims should be made. Egypt and all Member States are committed to respecting the zero-tolerance policy with regard to these crimes. I would like to highlight several items of importance in that regard.

First, the United Nations body responsible for the examination of issues of conduct and discipline within peacekeeping operations, including cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, is the General Assembly, whether through the Fifth Committee or the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. That is demonstrated by the fact that the report (A/70/729) of the Secretary-General presented to the Council today was initially submitted to the General Assembly, which is the competent body in this area. The General Assembly, which represents all the States Members of the United Nations, including troop-contributing countries, is undoubtedly the body that is the most apt to examine cases of sexual exploitation and abuse from a broader angle that takes into consideration the various primary actors.

Secondly, any investigation of cases of sexual exploitation and abuse within peacekeeping operations must include the examination of all the different missions mandated by the Security Council. Moreover, such investigation should treat all United Nations personnel in the same manner without any discrimination whatsoever, because fair and equal treatment within the context of cases of sexual exploitation and abuse sends a strong message to all those who would be tempted to commit such a crime, and ensures that the victims will not refrain from reporting perpetrators because of their nationality, affiliation or the organizations to which they are connected.

Thirdly, Egypt believes that cases of sexual exploitation and abuse should not be used as a tool to attack troop-contributing countries or their reputation, or to undermine the significant sacrifice they are undertaking to re-establish peace and security for civilians. Cases of sexual exploitation are individual, isolated cases. They represent a handful of incidents in comparison to the over 100,000 troops deployed. Moreover, these cases are not representative of the conduct of troop-contributing countries. My delegation is therefore categorically opposed to a policy of collective punishment against forces that are making the ultimate sacrifice in order to implement a mandate under very difficult conditions.

Fourthly, the best way to combat these crimes is to have Member States conduct investigations straightway into allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. Moreover, the Secretary-General must be informed of the results of such investigations as soon as possible.

Furthermore, it is essential to ensure that United Nations camps are separated from civilian populations. Also, contingents should be rotated and provided with adequate living conditions.

Of course, we thank the Secretary-General for his commitment and for having presented his vision of combating cases of sexual exploitation and abuse to the Security Council. However, at the same time, Member States should have been given an opportunity and sufficient time to discuss this very important topic within the framework of the General Assembly.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Senegal welcomes the initiative of organizing this meeting, which has afforded us an opportunity to hear a briefing by the Secretary-General on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations staff members. It follows the publication of his report (A/70/729) of 16 February 2016 on the special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report, which has enabled us to better understand the scale and reality of this scourge.

In addition to harming the image and credibility of the Organization, these acts unfortunately overshadow the praiseworthy efforts and the heroic work accomplished by tens of thousands of soldiers for peace, sometimes at the cost of their lives. That is why Senegal reiterates its commitment to the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy and expresses its deep concern with regard to the increase in the number of new cases of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, which rose from 80 in 2014 to 99 in 2015. Furthermore, my delegation deplores the fact that the percentage of allegations that concern sexual acts against minors or non-consensual sexual relations with adults has again increased, rising from 35 per cent in 2014 to 55 per cent in 2015.

This extremely unfortunate situation, which the Secretary-General has just described to us, makes all the more necessary our unceasing bold efforts to prevent and punish sexual exploitation and abuse of vulnerable populations by individuals mandated to protect them. It goes without saying that the troop- and police-contributing countries have the primary responsibility of investigating allegations against their uniformed personnel and, if necessary, of initiating criminal proceedings and informing the United Nations in a timely way of the progress and results of those investigations.

Faced with this scourge, we must bolster our action by giving pride of place to a constructive, preventive, responsible and decisive approach. We must also bring those responsible for cases of sexual exploitation and abuse to justice. However, with regard to the measures we adopt, we will have to ensure that innocent individuals do not fall victim to collective punishment for the crimes of individuals, even as we ensure the respect of the dignity and rights of the victims.

Senegal, as a significant troop- and police-contributing country, would like to reiterate its commitment to take all the necessary measures to fully assume the responsibilities incumbent upon it in this area. This commitment reflects the ideal that underpins our work in the field of peacekeeping, one of the key principles of which is clearly underscored in the 2016 plan of action of the Chief of Staff of the Senegalese armed forces, elaborated in the framework of training military personnel in the rights and protection of children:

> "The Senegalese armed forces, both within and outside our borders, have the duty not be perpetrators of abuse. Rather, they must be the protectors of vulnerable groups: women and children."

In that regard, I am pleased to recall that for Senegal the protection of civilians in the theatres of deployment of our troops constitutes the very essence of their presence. That is why the Senegalese armed forces are resolutely committed to incorporating the law of armed conflict into their training, planning and conducting of operations. The objective is to enable the men and women engaged in peacekeeping operations on the ground at all levels to better understand and especially to ensure respect for their obligations in the area of international humanitarian law and human rights.

To that end, Senegal, thanks to its continued cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the non-governmental organization Save the Children, has been able to organize several seminars and training sessions, including on international humanitarian law and respect for children's rights. We have also established, at the level of the Chief of Staff of the Army, a committee on the rights and protection of children, which is responsible for the implementation and coordination of training activities for military forces on the law and the protection of children before, during and after conflicts. In that regard, strict disciplinary measures have been stipulated for the perpetrators of violations of international humanitarian law, particularly in cases of violence, abuse or rape. Such measures include, inter alia, imprisonment, repatriation, discharge from the army or the gendarmerie, and trial before civilian or military tribunals. That underscores the importance my country attaches to the training and appropriate predeployment preparation of our troops.

I therefore call on our bilateral, regional and multilateral partners to accompany and support troop-contributing countries in their efforts to prevent sexual violations and abuse, particularly in terms of training and predeployment preparation.

In conclusion, I wish to distinctly reaffirm that Senegal, mindful of respect for human rights and the protection of civilians in times of conflict, remains determined to ensure that its army, which is well known for its professionalism and republican character, strictly upholds those principles in its theatres of operation.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): My delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing on the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse in the United Nations system, including measures undertaken to strengthen the Organization's response, as outlined in his report (A/70/729) to the General Assembly. The presence of the Secretary-General today demonstrates his clear commitment to addressing that challenge, which threatens to cast a long, dark shadow on the Organization's reputation. We welcome many of the messages he outlined to confront sexual exploitation and abuse and, as he has rightly said, to ensure that the United Nations becomes the vehicle of hope for the most vulnerable.

We also take note of the findings and recommendations on the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse contained in various reports and reviews, most recently the report of the high-level external independent review panel on sexual exploitation and abuse by international peacekeeping forces in the Central African Republic. We were particularly concerned over the findings of fragmentation of responsibility within the United Nations system and view the troubling lack of coordination as a major gap that needs to be addressed. In that regard, we welcome the appointment of Ms. Jane Holl Lute as Special Coordinator on improving the United Nations response to exploitation and abuse and look forward to continued updates on the recommendations and implementations.

We believe that sexual exploitation and abuse cannot be tackled in isolation. It requires the collective and concerted commitment and political will of all Members of the United Nations and the international community. We support the intention to address the sexual exploitation and abuse issue in a broader and more systematic manner across the United Nations system. In that connection, we note the Security Council's draft resolution, initiated by the United States delegation, and we will work constructively on it.

Malaysia also reaffirms the central role of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, which has been mandated by the wider membership to deliberate on all issues relating to United Nations peace operations. It is important that our parallel efforts be complementary with our shared aim to eliminate the sexual exploitation and abuse, seek accountability and alleviate the harm caused to vulnerable people.

Accountability for perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse cannot be achieved under a shroud of secrecy. Therefore, we are supportive of the Secretary-General's measures to increase transparency in the accountability process. However, we reiterate that Member States, particularly the troop- and police-contributing countries, have the primary responsibility to hold their personnel accountable for sexual exploitation and abuse. In order to do so, information and credible evidence regarding allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse must be channelled by the United Nations in a timely manner to Member States for subsequent action.

Malaysia believes that improving investigation procedures for sexual exploitation and abuse allegations increases the accountability process. Therefore, we are supportive of such initiatives, including the establishment of immediate response teams at peacekeeping missions to gather and preserve evidence and the adoption of a six-month time line for the completion of their investigations.

We reaffirm that Malaysia enforces a strict zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse for our peacekeeping troops. All Malaysian peacekeepers undergo compulsory predeployment training in which specific modules and briefings are conducted to raise awareness of acts that constitute sexual exploitation and abuse and the consequences of committing such acts. We also have national laws in place to ensure the prosecution and punishment of Malaysian peacekeeping personnel for serious misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse. We hope that the strong measures announced by the Secretary-General to strengthen accountability for sexual exploitation and abuse, including imposing sanctions against those who commit acts of misconduct and who fail to take actions against them, will create a deterrent effect and galvanize prevention efforts at the highest level.

We also note the decision of the Secretary-General to repatriate contingents where there is a demonstrated pattern of abuse or non-response to allegations of misconduct, which we view as a measure of last resort. At the same time, we call on the Secretary-General to issue clear criteria and guidelines in making such decisions and to engage constructively with police- and troop-contributing countries on that issue.

We must not forget that our discussion today was triggered by heinous acts against children by international peacekeepers, both United Nations and non-United Nations, in the Central African Republic. The series of sexual exploitation and abuse cases involving children and the failure to provide timely follow-up assistance to the victims underscores the continued need to raise awareness on and mainstream child protection in peacekeeping operations. We urge mission leadership to instil a culture of child protection in peacekeeping missions and stress the important role that child protection advisers can play in preventing and responding to allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse against children. The monitoring and reporting mechanism established under the Security Council's children and armed conflict framework should be utilized to collect and analyse information on sexual exploitation and abuse allegations involving child victims in order to ensure that necessary follow-up actions can be provided.

Knowledge is the best defence and the provision of training for peacekeeping personnel cannot be overstated as a means of prevention. Therefore, we also advocate mandatory predeployment training on child protection, in addition to training on sexual exploitation and abuse prevention for all United Nations peacekeepers, and we support the Secretary-General's initiative for troop- and police-contributing countries to issue certificates of compliance.

There is a tendency to discuss sexual exploitation and abuse in the abstract, in terms of numbers and percentages that keep us detached from the reality of sexual exploitation and abuse cases. In comprehensively addressing the issue, let us remember that these are real people — mothers, daughters, fathers and sons — who suffer the anguish and harm of sexual exploitation and abuse. The international community must ensure that they receive the necessary attention, including medical and psychological assistance. They must be our priority in pursuing accountability.

I wish to conclude by reaffirming my delegation's readiness to work closely with Council members and other partners and stakeholders, especially the troop- and police-contributing countries, as well as the Secretariat, to address our common aims. The pledge taken by all United Nations peacekeepers, entitled "We are United Nations peacekeepers", recognizes the Blue Helmets as the embodiment of the aspirations of all the people of the world for peace. The expectations of the international community and the local populations who they are sent to protect are extremely high. That is why cases of sexual exploitation and abuse and the subsequent failure to take action by the international community are very painful to confront. However, only when we are honest about our own shortcomings can we genuinely work to overcome them. Only then can we live up to the lofty ideals we seek to uphold.

Mr. Minami (Japan): At the outset, my delegation would like to extend its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his briefing, which stressed three points: ending impunity, protection and support for victims, and ensuring accountability.

It is regrettable that allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers persist. According to the Secretary-General's report (A/70/729) released last week, 69 allegations were reported in 2015. Bearing in mind that peacekeepers are deployed to protect people and that they are sometimes the last hope of people suffering in conflicts, sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers is absolutely unacceptable. It is also unacceptable that sexual exploitaiton and abuse has significantly damaged the credibility of the United Nations. Japan therefore strongly supports the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy and believes that effective measures must be taken until there are no cases of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Japan supports the Secretary-General's decision to repatriate contingents where there is a demonstrated pattern of misconduct. The main aim of that measure is not to point fingers at the contingents but to urge troop- and police-contributing countries to take action. We need to realize that investigating the allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse is primarily the responsibility of the troop- and police-contributing countries, and they have to take appropriate actions with regard to the allegations and hold those personnel accountable for sexual exploitation and abuse. By doing so, troop- and police-contributing countries can demonstrate their commitment to the zero-tolerance policy and preserve the honour of the vast majority of peacekeepers who are fulfilling their tasks seriously.

Japan has supported and will support the Secretary-General's efforts in tackling sexual exploitation and abuse through concrete contributions. One contribution is providing financial support for the online training of all categories of peacekeepers. Without sufficient training, no field personnel can maintain a high standard of conduct and discipline. With Japan's support, peacekeepers will be trained under the United Nations e-learning programme on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, which is to be operational in May this year. We are convinced that this programme will be a firm step towards the eradication of sexual explotiation and abuse.

Another concrete contribution that Japan is considering is in the area of support for victims. As the Secretary-General has recommended, it is necessary to secure specialized assistance to the victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. At the second peacekeeping summit, held last September, Japan already expressed its commitment to providing support for a remedial action programme for victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. We welcome the initiative of the United Nations to establish a trust fund to support victims, and we stand ready to consider the proposal.

Let me conclude by saying that all of us — the Secretariat, the Security Council and all Member States — have to cooperate in tackling such shameful misconduct by taking concrete measures for the sake of both victims and peacekeepers. Japan will continue to support the efforts of the Secretary-General in this area. Japan also hopes that the Council will adopt this draft resolution as soon as possible.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and for his efforts and measures to combat sexual abuse within the United Nations. France welcomes his determination and exemplary mobilization to take all the necessary measures to prevent and fight sexual exploitation and abuse in the United Nations.

Sexual abuse committed by Blue Helmets, both military and police, but also by United Nations civilian personnel and international forces that do not operate in the United Nations command, is unacceptable. That is why France supports the Security Council draft resolution on sexual abuse under consideration. It is also why France supports the efforts of the Secretary-General aimed at further strengthening the zero-tolerance policy through concrete proposals. A number of them have already been implemented; others are still being considered in other forums. These exchanges, this momentum, are positive and are encouraging with regard to the future of peacekeeping operations.

The zero-tolerance policy regarding sexual abuse must apply at all levels. First, at the level of the United Nations, it must apply on the ground. In peacekeeping operations, several operational measures will make it possible to change the daily lives of the local population: the repatriation of units suspected of sexual abuse, the appointment of focal points within peacekeeping operations to prevent sexual abuse, and efforts to improve support for victims. All these steps will contribute to changing the culture and reality of peacekeeping operations.

However, zero tolerance does not concern only the Blue Helmets. Unfortunately, among the civilian personnel of the United Nations programmes and agencies there have also been cases of sexual abuse, including by those who tend to the needs of the most vulnerable — refugees and displaced persons. That is why France calls for stepped-up vigilance and efforts to increase, through adapted infrastructure and means, the protection of these populations, often marked by extreme poverty and extreme weakness and are traumatized by the violence of conflict. We owe special protection to women and chilren, who are the first targets of various acts of abuse, violence and exploitation in camps and sites for refugees and displaced persons.

Zero tolerance must begin with its application at the level of the United Nations, but zero tolerance applies at the national level as well. It is the responsibility of every State to take the necessary steps to prevent sexual abuse and also to bring to justice those suspected of such abuse. That is what we do in France.

With regard to prevention, our security forces in France are systematically vetted regarding their history in terms of respect for human rights, in keeping with the policy required by the United Nations. Our security forces are also systematically trained on the protection of human rights and the fight against sexual abuse before deployment. France intends to strengthen its training and prevention system within the framework of its security forces. France is also pleased to announce that it will contribute to the financing of the office of the Special Coordinator on improving the United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse,special Ms. Jane Holl Lute. We warmly welcome her appointment.

Regarding the fight against impunity, France deploys, as requested by the Secretary-General, national investigation officers within its contingents in order to respond rapidly to allegations. Furthermore, as soon as allegations were reported in the Central African Republic, French justice opened judicial proceedings to shed full light on the situation. Justice must be carried out if these allegations are confirmed, in a way mindful of the fundamental principles of the law and with respect for the independence of the judiciary.

Zero tolerance must also be applied at the regional level. Regional organizations are not, unfortunately, spared allegations of sexual abuse. That is why it is essential to act at this level as well, especially as those organizations are often key partners of the United Nations in peacekeeping operations. Thus we call on the African Union — which incudes countries that contribute troops to the United Nations and through its own missions acts both both upstream and downstream of the Blue Helmets — to strengthen its cooperation with the United Nations in these matters.

This public debate marks a movement for peacekeeping operations from which there is no turning back. They can no longer close their eyes and remain silent about sexual abuse. Today the Concil speaks publicly in order to break the silence and the stigmatization that burdens the victims so a to send them a message of hope.

Lastly, I would like to end on a note of encouragement and thanks for the tens of thousands of soldiers and police officers, from the United Nations or elsewhere, who are not implicated in the allegations and who put their lives on the line in order to save others. They should know that we do not wish to stigmatize them for the actions of others; on the contrary, we want to assure them that they can continue to do their work with the effectiveness it needs.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the convening of today's meeting and are grateful for the stance taken by the Secretary-General in his report on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (A/70/729), issued in February, given its overriding importance for the issues of credibility and moral support of our peacekeeping operations.

As the report says, such actions contradict and undermine the spirit of the United Nations and the very purpose for which its missions are created, which is to protect the populations of countries in extremely fragile situations and the poverty produced by conflict. Added to the suffering created in a context of war and instability is the fact that people are endangered by the possibility that the personnel sent to alleviate those situations are taking advantage of the circumstances to commit this kind of crime, which only results in greater despair among those affected, especially the most vulnerable, such as women and children, and to rejection of the presence of international peacekeeping missions.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela considers that acts of sexual exploitation and abuse in a context of armed conflict represent more than just a discipline issue; they are a shameful phenomenon that may violate international humanitarian and human rights laws. In that regard, we emphasize that Venezuela categorically condemns any incident of sexual abuse or exploitation committed by personnel from any foreign contingent, whether military, police or civilian, deployed in peacekeeping operations or special political missions, as well as by personnel from our Organization who are not considered to be deployed in such operations.

We are aware of the various categories of operations on the ground under United Nations mandates, particularly those of the Security Council, the various types of personnel who carry out functions within them — civilian, military or police deployed or not deployed — and the differences among those who have responsibility when it comes to taking measures to punish such crimes. However, we believe that, despite such differences and bureaucratic complexities, what is fundamental here is that we are talking about unacceptable and intolerable acts that compromise and damage the legitimacy and work of our Organization.

The United Nations must set an example of consistency and firmness and a high level of moral commitment when it comes to the importance of preventing the perpetration such acts, particularly regarding accountability, by United Nations personnel and those outside the Organization but authorized by it, whatever their country of origin or professional category. In that context, Venezuela supports the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy for acts of sexual violence committed in peacekeeping operations or any military mission that has the Security Council's mandate or support. We should ensure follow-up and accountability even in cases where they are the responsibility of countries contributing troops or other personnel.

It is also important to emphasize that according to the figures in the report, of the 99 alleged cases in various operations, 30 involved personnel considered not to be deployed; 38 involved military personnel; 16, police officers and 15, civilian personnel considered as deployed in peacekeeping operations. Overall, 38 per cent of the total represents military personnel and 61.2 per cent, other categories. Those numbers should tell the United Nations, and the Security Council specifically, that any binding action that could be taken should involve sanctions and action to combat impunity for all categories of personnel, whether civilian, military, volunteers, police or support staff, regardless of their nationality.

This is an essential responsibility for our Organization. We agree with the Secretary-General that transparency and accountability are fundamental to the ability of the United Nations to demonstrate its collective adherence to a policy of zero tolerance, maintain the international community's trust, ensure justice for the victims and achieve the purposes of peacekeeping operations. It is also important to ensure that any investigation or punishment is guided by the principles of objectivity, non-selectivity and impartiality. No country should receive privileged treatment, and there should be no difference between North and South, considering that countries of the southern hemisphere tend to be stigmatized. We believe this subject should not be politicized.

In our view, it is crucial to improve these mechanisms and to ensure that frequent dialogues are held with troop- and police-contributing countries, with the goal of discussing the topic and improving the coordination of action for a greater impact on prevention and the fight against impunity. In that regard, we reiterate that it is vital to fully implement article 44 of the Charter of the United Nations, which requires that troop-contributing countries be invited to participate in the decision-making process concerning the deployment of personnel in peacekeeping operations. In practice, that has never really been implemented.

While we therefore welcome the discussion of this sensitive issue in the Council, it is essential that we ensure close coordination on it with the General

Assembly, particularly through the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, the body in charge of formulating comprehensive policies pertaining to the operations of such missions so as to avoid duplication of functions and to ensure that institutional efforts are not scattered around the Organization. In its 2015 report (A/69/19), the Special Committee emphasized that the same standards of personal conduct must be applied without exception to all categories of United Nations personnel. That is a principle that should be implemented in order to improve the Organization's credibility.

Another issue where improvements could be made is in the area of strengthening mechanisms to help victims, who in many cases have to deal with stigmatization and ostracism from their family members or communities and can sometimes be the target of retaliation by the perpetrators. That involves having the necessary resources for ensuring that victims are safe and receive proper medical and psychological care.

In conclusion, Venezuela would like to reiterate its commitment to strengthening the institutional, administrative and judicial mechanisms we need to deal with such cases, especially cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, committed by any personnel linked to operations authorized by the United Nations. In that regard, we have received and are discussing the text of the draft resolution proposed to the Security Council, and we hope it will take into consideration the views expressed today by the members of the Council.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. We also appreciate the leadership of the United States in that regard. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his strong and unambiguous stance on the issue discussed today.

Ukraine is convinced of the enormous importance of addressing the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse in a just, effective and timely manner. It is extremely disturbing that, despite measures taken to enforce the zero-tolerance policy, in the past year alone 69 allegations of serious misconduct in peacekeeping missions were reported. Even more appalling is the fact that allegations involving the most serious forms of sexual exploitation and abuse — sexual exploitation of and sexual acts with minors — continue to constitute more than 50 per cent of all those reported.

The protection of civilians is a clear, overarching objective for United Nations peacekeeping operations. It often involves issues directly related to the protection of civilians, including protecting them from conflict-related sexual violence and trafficking.

In that regard, it is even more striking that reports of alleged sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers, often involving those who are vulnerable and whom the United Nations has been called upon to protect, have continued to surface for years. We believe that the Security Council should send a strong message with regard to that problem. Ukraine welcomes the recent report (A/70/729) of the Secretary-General on special measures on protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and his efforts to prevent such incidents. We support planned activities on prevention, enforcement and remedial action, including support to victims, as outlined in the report of the Secretary General, and we fully agree his recommendations.

We also appreciate the focus on that issue in the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/682) on the implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations. We welcome the appointment of Jane Holl Lute as Special Coordinator on improving the United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse.

Apart from protecting the local population from sexual exploitation and abuse, it is also of particular importance that the United Nations policy in that area be focused on prioritizing the security and well-being of victims, including by maintaining confidentiality during investigations, helping to minimize trauma and facilitating access to immediate care and medical and psychological support. Among the important components of the relevant preventive policy, special attention must also be paid to vetting all peacekeeping personnel, along with respective predeployment training. In that regard, we welcome the decision of the Secretary-General to require certificates of compliance, and we express full support for the United Nations human rights screening policy.

As an active troop- and police-contributing country, Ukraine is paying a great deal of attention to the issue that we are discussing today. In order to send well-trained and properly prepared peacekeepers to serve in United Nations peacekeeping operations throughout the world, our special peacekeeping training centre at our national police academy and our training and research centre on international peacekeeping activity at the National Defence Academy of Ukraine are up and running. Both of those institutions provide the necessary training for military and police personnel in accordance with United Nations requirements, including on the subject of the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. In that context, Ukraine re-affirms its determination to strictly implement a zero-tolerance policy among its peacekeepers. We fully recognize our two-fold responsibility, as a member elected to the Council and as an active peacekeeping nation, to strengthen the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse and create a system of accountability for the perpetrators of such acts. Concrete and effective preventive measures must be instituted. A much more aggressive approach to ensuring justice has to be pursued. Accountability must be real and public.

For those reasons, we support the draft resolution put forward by the United States.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, Spain would like to express its enormous gratitude for the outstanding work that our Blue Helmets are carrying out. We believe that it is appropriate, on the day after of having just returned from a Security Council trip during which we were able observe the work of the Blue Helmets on the ground, to once again recall the admirable work that they are carrying out in what are certainly difficult conditions. Nevertheless, there are issues, such as the ones that we are discussing today, that are clearly tarnishing the image and the work of the United Nations. Our collective responsibility is therefore to put a definitive end to their reoccurrence. But the responsibility of the Security Council is not limited only to peacekeeping operations, but to all operations that have been authorized by the Council.

I do not think it is a matter of pointing fingers at one country or one troop-contributor for having committed acts that I qualify as horrendous. The essence of this discussion is for us to establish a collective response by members of the Council. For that reason, the delegation of Spain would like to focus on three essential aspects to improve the situation: first, prevention; secondly, investigation; and, thirdly accountability.

With regard to prevention, I believe that it is absolutely fundamental for troop-contributing countries to maximally tighten the procedures involved for training their military personnel. If Blue Helmets are properly trained by the troop-contributing countries, we will have achieved significant progress. On that account, I would like to highlight the importance that we attach to troop-contributing countries certifying to the United Nations that those training courses have actually taken place and meet what must be high-quality and excellent standards. That certification needs to be renewed and reviewed on a very frequent basis. For if we really want to be efficient in the fight against sexual violence, we must confront the root causes, and those causes lead us to the sad conclusion that, unfortunately, they have a very specific impact in the case of women and children.

Perhaps a significant preventive measure to achieve substantial progress would be to double the percentage of women in peacekeeping operations. That will be a measure that will have a significant impact. I recall that that measure is included in resolution 2242 (2015). Its impact will be positive not only in general terms, but also because the victims, most of whom are women, in the context of peacekeeping operations will feel more free and less afraid to report possible abuses that have been committed.

Secondly, on investigation, it is necessary to implement urgent measures aimed at carrying out investigations of received allegations within a maximum time frame of six months. A time frame of six months seems reasonable to me. But if within six months the troop-contributing country has not shed light on facts, I believe that the Security Council and the United Nations system should establish an inquiry mechanism that should be set up at a maximum of nine months from the time that the crime in question was committed.

Thirdly, on accountability, this concerns the Security Council and all troop- and police- contributing countries, because we must to put in place the measures necessary to ensure that the perpetrators are judged and punished.

Spain warmly welcomes the measures set out in the Secretary-General's latest report (A/70/729), in particular those pertaining to the repatriation of a whole contingent if the elements I have mentioned fail and the troop-contributing country does not cooperate with the United Nations in line with the agreements established by the Organization. For those countries whose armed forces have been mentioned in the annexes of the Secretary-General's reports with regard to cases of children in armed conflict or sexual violence in conflicts, I sincerely urge them to cooperate with the Organization so that all those crimes do not remain unpunished.

In conclusion, I would like to say that there are civilians who are targets of abuse and sexual violence by some individuals who are supposed to be there to protect them. For those victims, I believe that the least they expect of us, which they deserve, is that we protect them adequately and, if abuses occur, the Security Council spares no effort in shedding light on such cases as quickly as possible. I therefore think that the adoption of a draft resolution on this specific issue is urgent, needed and totally appropriate.

Mr. Taula (New Zealand): We thank the Secretary-General for his helpful briefing and engagement on this important issue. We also welcome his report (A/70/729) and its recommendations, and the appointment of Jane Holl Lute Special Coordinator.

Let me begin by acknowledging the vital work carried out by peacekeepers serving with missions mandated by the Council, and by paying testament to the courage and commitment they display in carrying out their role in trying and dangerous circumstances. As mentioned, Council membes saw this directly in recent days on their visit to West Africa. But today we must be frank in also acknowledging that our systems for preventing, monitoring and responding to instances of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeeping personnel are failing. This failure is inflicting a terrible cost on the people that our peacekeepers are responsible for protecting. The reputation and effectiveness of the Organization are being damaged.

These allegations represent more than isolated, individual instances of wrong doing, and they are not restricted to one or two missions. They represent a systemic failure that all of us — the Secretariat, contributing countries and Council members — have a responsibility to fix. Continuing to muddle through with our current business-as-usual approach is simply not an option.

Zero tolerance of sexual exploitation and abuse has been our mantra for the past decade, and yet despite this, and despite the many policies, standards and procedures that have been put in place to address this since Prince Zeid's landmark report (see A/59/710), we continue to see new allegations emerge against peacekeepers and to learn of new victims of crimes that are, at times, of an horrific nature. This is despite the considerable high-level attention directed to this issue, including by the Secretary- General himself, over the past year.

We are not lacking a clear problem definition, or policies and standards. What we are lacking appears to be the political will to implement and enforce these standards. Too often, a blind eye is turned to allegations and no action is taken to hold those responsible to account. We need to create a genuine culture of zero tolerance — a culture where there is clear accountability, both for abuse and for its prevention, reporting and prosecution; a culture where the fear of reputational damage from acknowledging allegations does not override the responsibility to respond effectively; a culture where the real stigma lies not with the allegations themselves, but in failing to adequately report and respond.

New Zealand understands that there are no quick and easy solutions and that there are many practical and operational challenges. We can address this problem only if all concerned — the Council, the wider United Nations system and troop- and police-contributing countries — work together collaboratively to find solustions. At the heart of our response must be the victims of abuse and their right to respect, support and accountability. An effective response to serious crimes and human rights violations will also go some way towards restoring the credibility of United Nations peacekeeping missions in the communities they are sent to protect.

Council members have been working on a draft resolution to address these shortcomings. New Zealand thanks the United States for its initiative. The Security Council can support action in several key areas.

First, we must support the Secretary-General's commitment to repatriating those contingents that demonstrate a widespread or systematic pattern of sexual exploitation or abuse or a consistent failure to adequately follow up on allegations.

Secondly, we must remove the obstacles around making complaints and ensure better management of all complaints received. Processes for dealing with victims need to be centrally coordinated and managed more carefully and confidentially.

Thirdly, victims need to receive the support, assistance and responses that they deserve. Many aspects of the approach in the 2008 United Nations Comprehensive Strategy on Assistance and Support to

Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse should simply be baseline work for any United Nations mission.

Fourthly, the United Nations needs to get more serious about systems and resources for vetting peacekeepers. The current policy is limited to screening senior leadership only, and the United Nations needs to invest much more in order to go further than that.

Fifthly, we need a better process and division of roles on investigative duties. No national legal system would build in a 10-day delay to begin investigation, as set for the United Nations if a troop- or police-contributing country is unable to investigate.

Finally, we believe that it is beyond question that the Council has both a right and an obligation to engage on this issue. New Zealand fully respects the competence and role of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and the Fifth Committee, but we strongly disagree with the suggestion that the Council is not responsible for the consequences of the mandates it approves or for the actions of the personnel it deploys. The draft resolution we have is primarily about implementing and enforcing the standards that the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and the General Assembly have agreed or acknowledged already.

We can and must provide for more effective responses to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations peacekeeping. We owe it to the victims, to ourselves, to the peacekeepers who have given their lives, and to the values on which the Organization was founded.

Mr. Bermudez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first like to thank the presidency of the Security Council for convening today's meeting and the Secretary-General for his substantive briefing.

Uruguay, as both a member of the Security Council and a troop-contributing country with a long history of involvement in various peacekeeping operations, attaches great importance to combating cases of sexual exploitation and abuse and, as such, is highly committed to the United Nations zero-tolerance policy in such cases. Whoever commits sexual exploitation and abuse is acting in a way that it is to be condemned in every sense. But from a penal perspective, it is an aggravating factor because the perpetrator is exploiting the trust of those who require protection and is in clear violation of the mandate under which he is deployed. I emphasize that in these cases, Uruguay is a troop-contributing country has been moving tirelessly forward in this field by increasing prevention through predeployment training, adequate control on the ground and the right leadership at all levels.

There is not a single case of sexual exploitation and abuse that has not been duly and speedily resolved when a Uruguayan has been involved, complying thereby with due process with maximum guarantees for accused and accuser alike, applying appropriate measures to those found guilty of committing such acts. The accountability of the perpetrators and support for the victims are ensured in legal provisions adopted by the Uruguayan Government, thereby confirming its commitment to human rights and the dignity of the victims. Without claiming to be exhaustive, let me mention certain measures designed by Uruguay to advance the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse.

All members of national contingents must pass a predeployment course, designed by professionals outside the armed forces and with the participation of the United Nations country office with respect to human rights, international humanitarian law, sexual exploitation and abuse policy, gender policy and child protection policy. All members must sign a predeployment affidavit in which they acknowledge that they have been instructed in the aforementioned topics and accepti responsibilities arising from the breach thereof, authorizing the payroll deduction of disciplinary repatriation and associated costs.

Uruguay has communicated to the United Nations and the authorities of peacekeeping missions in which Uruguayan contingents contact details of a focal point in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, where people implicated in possible cases of exploitation sexual abuse committed by Uruguayan troops — including paternity cases — or their legal representatives can seek advice concerning procedures avilable to them for exercising their rights under Uruguayan law. Uruguay's Ministry of National Defence has put in place a protocol to provide the broadest possible guarantees in the procedures to be followed from the identification of a possible case of sexual exploitation and abuse to its resolution. It includes the requisite measures to be taken with regard to perpetrators and the support to be offered to the victims. We are in the process of developing a mechanism to facilitate victims' access to the justice system, with a view to ensuring their rights and substantiating their allegations. Many of the complementary measures we have adopted in connection with the responsibility of each troop deployed to a peacekeeping operation have also contributed to ensuring that we were able to collect DNA samples from the accused.

As I mentioned earlier, the commitment of Uruguay with regard to cases of sexual exploitation and abuse is based on respect for human rights and the dignity of victims. That is the main reason that we should continue work until there is never another case. However, I do not want to fail to mention the systemic damage that such cases cause for United Nations peacekeeping efforts, whether to peacekeeping operations or other operations authorized by the Security Council operations. Uruguay is seriously concerned about the negative impact of such cases on the credibility and image of peacekeeping operations, as well as the negative impact in terms of the ability to fulfil mission mandates.

Above all, however, we are especially concerned that, while there is a wide range of behaviours that comprise a case of sexual exploitation and abuse involving military, police or civilian personnel, the fact is that those responsible cross an unacceptable line, which in many instances may involve violations of human rights but in all cases involve an assault on the dignity of victims. Unfortunately, such cases end up tarnishing and affecting the heroic and responsible work of the more than 100,000 peacekeeping personnel deployed in the various missions, some of whom lose their lives in the field in pursuit of their the mandates.

Let me conclude by saying that, notwithstanding the fact that the Security Council is addressing this issue today — and rightly and in a timely manner — Uruguay stresses the importance of other bodies of the General Assembly, such as the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and the Fifth Committee, holding similar discussions. Given the seriousness and sensitivity of the issuse before us, there is nothing incompatible about having more than one body addreess the matter, and there should be no fear of duplicating effort. In that regard, Uruguay hopes that the negotiations that are taking place in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations will come to a successful conclusion, in particular in relation to the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Angola.

We thank the Secretary-General for presenting to the Security Council his report (A/70/229) on special measures on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, which provides an analysis and strategies to counter this outrageous phenomenon in the United Nations system. We welcome the holding of this debate, which affords the members of the Council an opportunity to renew their political support to the Secretary-General in implementing the zero-tolerance policy against sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers, as well as our resolve in condemning such actions.

The report of the Secretary-General refers to an increase in the number of alleged cases in 2015, following a decrease in 2014, involving a relatively high proportion of minors and non-consensual relations involving adults — with cases in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic reaching a peak. Angola strongly condemns violence against civilians, in particular sexually related violence — against women, girls and boys — by United Nations peacekeepers. We therefore fully support the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy and welcome the continuous commitment and strengthening of measures aimed at accountability based on the principles of transparency and impartiality. We are encouraged by his renewed commitment to ensure that reported allegations are fully and promptly investigated, in cooperation with troop-contributing countries, to ensure that those responsible are held accountable.

In that regard, we deem predeployment training as an essential tool to avoid misconduct and ensure that troops strictly respect the Organization's standards of conduct. It is important to systematically include the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence and its follow-up in the relevant country-specific resolutions and the mandates of special political and peacekeeping missions. Furthermore, increasing the number of women in peacekeeping operations and police units can help combat stigma and threats of reprisal, which impede victims from reporting. We welcome the Secretary-General's plan to develop a community-based complaint reception mechanism — a measure that I am sure will help to address the fear among victims that we see today. We also suppor the proposal that troop-contributing countries enter into bilateral agreements with the Office of Internal Oversight Services to authorize it to investigate alleged cases by members of military contingents, either independently or in cooperation with national investigation officers. Other measures, such as better-calibrated rotation schedules, adequate provision of welfare programmes and better standards of living for troops and the regular payment of salaries to uniformed personnel, are sensible measures capable of addressing the need for a reduction in such cases.

We have just returned from a Council mission to Mali, where we saw a peacekeeping mission deployed under the most challenging circumstances. We pay special tribute to those heroic peacekeepers, not just in Mali but in other theatres, in very special circumstances, who unfortunately see their work being tarnished by the actions of a few. We should act on this issue very vigorously.

We took good note of the recommendations by the external independent panel to review the United Natins response, and especially of the Secretary-General's clear and forward-looking proposals to strengthen measures to prevent and protect and to enforce accountability, management and remedial action in response to sexual exploitation and abuse.

Finally, we have taken note of the draft resolution presented by the United States. We are ready to continue work on it in a constructive spirit in order to achieve a Council document that is the good product we would like to see put in place.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: First I would like to thank the President for taking the initiative to organize a debate on this very important subject, which has a lot to do with our reputation and future work. The open discussion on this shameful issue will create a sense of urgency with regard to and raise awareness of the need to take immediate action based on the principles of accountability and transparency.

This issue has not only humbled me; it has left me feeling very regretful and ashamed as the Secretary-General of the United Nations. I am sure that the message that the Council has conveyed strongly and unambiguously will help to strengthen my commitment as well as that of the senior advisors of the United Nations engaged in this area. Again, I feel deeply sorry for the victims, in particular those minors whose human rights and dignity have been abused. I apologize for not having taken more thorough care on this matter. I thank the Council for presenting clear guidelines and directions to the Secretariat, myself and the world. The United Nations is very committed.

As Ambassador Samantha Power has so eloquently, passionately and emotionally stated, this matter greatly affects our reputation. Why were we unable to address this issue much, much earlier? Only a few people are responsible for the problem. There is a saying that a small mudfish can make an otherwise clean stream dirty. We must eliminate thse practices. We must get rid of those mudfish, and I am very much committed to working with the Council on this matter. At the same time, despite the shamefulness of the issue, we must honour the integrity, sacrifice and hard work of the tens of thousands of peacekeepers and police officers who are working under very difficult and often dangerous circumstances. We have lost a lot of peacekeepers. We really have to honour them. Their reputation, integrity and honour should not be tarnished by this small number of people. I am really commiting myself on this matter.

During my term as Secretary-General, which began in 2007, the issue of ending violence against women has been one of my top priorities. Council members may remember that I launched the Unite to End Violence against Women campaign in 2008. Then, in 2009, knowing that the mentality of men must be changed, I established the Network of Men Leaders. I reached out to a great number of men leaders in Governments and the business community, and religious leaders. We have been working to eliminate these practices.

However, we see now that we have been neglecting our own in-house concerns. This has happened in-house, and we have to take greater responsibility for this matter. I appointed the first Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and I have a Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. And I have appointed most recently Jane Holl Lute. Appointing special representatives or responsible persons may be helpful, but I need the support of everybody — all Member States, the Secretariat, and people working in the field. We all must work together.

As I have presented in my report (A/70/729), I think this matter should be addressed comprehensively. First and foremost, we have to do much more to end this violence and help the victims. I appreciate the willingness of Member States to provide financial and other material support to a trust fund. At the same time, I am also grateful that Member States agree to my proposal to withhold the salaries of those that have committed violence and to transfer those salaries to a trust fund. That is a a small effort, but I do need the strong support of Member States.

Measures to ensure accountability should be formulated, strengthened and implemented. Without an accountability process firmly established in mindsets as well as in our system, I regret to say that we will see this kind of crime continue. In that regard, I am making sure that our investigations of currently pending cases are expedited. From 2010 through 2015, we received 407 cases of alleged abuse. Eighty per cent of them have been concluded. As of the end of 2015, we still had 54 cases pending. I believe that a large number of those 54 cases were reported in 2015. We have concluded all investigations up through 2012. We still have three cases from 2013 and three cases pending from 2014. We will make sure to expedite the investigations as much as possible. Out of 407 cases, we have concluded 353. However, 48 cases remain . I will make sure that investigations are expedited. Although I suggested a six-month investigation period, we will shorten the process further.

Once allegations have been reported or a report has been received, we will take interim measures. For example, the persons involved may be suspended from the mission or confined to the barracks, or assigned to another mission, which will then have to confine that person within the mission. And of course, salaries will be withheld as much as possible.

Now, during the course of discussions some Member States have stated — and of course I agree with them — that the honour and reputation of troop-contributing countries should be respected. We have tried to do that by not disclosing the names of countries until most recently. However, we have realized that this is not very helpful. That is why last year we returned the personnel of certain Member States, whose names have already been publicized, and established a conduct and discipline website where we are making all the names of the countries and cases available at all times to Member States and the international community.

There may always be a question about whether naming and shaming is a good policy or not at this time. Sometimes we need to make it known to the public so that they will also be motivated to improve their way of conducting their business. In that regard, as most speakers today have explained and expressed, it is extremely important for troop-contributing countries to offer firm and strong predeployment education and training on the importance of respecting human rights, particularly gender empowerment and balance. Without the strong engagement and commitment of the Member States, it will be extremely difficult for the Secretariat to manage these cases alone.

As Secretary-General for the past many years, I have directly confronted many Heads of State, face to face, and told them: "You cannot go on like this". Some Heads of State have made excuses, saying that the alleged crime was not committed by their people. I am talking about national crimes of sexual violance, not United Nations-related. They say that the crimes are committed by rebels. "But Mr. President," I reply, "Are you not the leader of a sovereign State? Whoever commits these crimes within your territorial boundaries is your responsibility. You have to be accountable." I have gone face to face in my fights with Heads of State.

I again commit myself to confronting any country that continues to permit such crimes. Particularly at the United Nations, we have to clean house; only then can I go out to Member States worldwide to eradicate sexual violence against women. That is my strong commitment, and I really count on the strong engagement and support of Member States. I truly appreciate the fact that the Security Council has raised this issue.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his clarification.

The representative of the United States has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I know I had the floor at length earlier, so I will try to be as brief as possible. Like the Secretary-General, because of the gravity of what we are discussing here and the insufficiency of what we have mustered up to this point as an international community, I think it is worth coming back to some of the points of convergence around the table, as well as the few points of divergence, which I do not think we should paper over.

First, in response to something my Egyptian colleagues mentioned with respect to the number of cases, I just want to seek clarification because, at least as interpreted, there was an initial reference to several dozen cases, but later to only a handful of cases. I want to state for the record that it is more than several dozen cases, and certainly far more than a handful. We had more than 69 allegations in 2015; we have already had

26 people come forward to report cases in 2016. But we have no idea how pervasive this problem is. We have no idea. I think that everyone believes that one case is one too many, but I think we need to be very careful given the details outlined the Secretary-General's report (A/70/729). We need at least to all mobilize around the extent of the problem that has managed to be documented. I suspect that if there were better reporting in more places, unfortunately we would likely see more allegations being brought forward. But that is a supposition. Let us at least have a shared understanding of the facts that have been presented by the Secretary-General.

Secondly, like a number of Council members that have made this point, we totally agree that there cannot be collective guilt or national stigmatization. I think that is extremely important, and all of us have tried to make that point in our statements. But that is why individual responsibility and accountability, as well as individual punishment if warranted, are so important. And it is not happening, by and large. I shall come back to the Secretary-General's statistics in a second, but the definition of insanity is to do the same thing over and over again — or not do the same thing over and over again — and expect a different result. The system that has been in place has not had the desired effect, in two respects.

Allegations keep being brought forward, with a lot of documentation — photographs of babies whose DNA has been tested, and so on. This is happening; this is a phenomenon. Moreover, the individual perpetrators of these crimes are not being punished back in their home countries. I particularly appreciated the Secretary-General's extemporaneous comments in that regard. Absolutely, the United Nations and the individuals who serve it have to do much more, but we do not have court martial processes or courtrooms in this building, so the Member States have to support the Secretary-General. He can do everything he sets out to do in the report, which he and those who work for the United Nations must do, but he needs us. What he does is totally necessary and not at all sufficient. We have got to make changes. We cannot just say the same things we have been saying for a decade and expect the outcomes to be different — that there is going to be less sexual abuse or more accountability in capitals.

Thirdly, the representative of Egypt said that the General Assembly is the competent body to deal with what my friend and colleague rightly denounced as these horrific crimes. The United States is part of the General Assembly. We would welcome constructive action by the General Assembly, but the General Assembly has had 11 years since our last open security meeting on this topic (see S/PV.5191) to take more aggressive and constructive steps that might have made more of a dent in this problem. What we in the General Assembly have done has not yet worked. The facts are the facts; the allegations are the allegations; the record of inaction in the capitals is by and large a record that shames us all, including those of us who have very strong bilateral relationships with a lot of the countries concerned. We have not been as aggressive as we needed to be.

What is hard about hearing the jurisdictional argument again and again about how this issue belongs somewhere else is that in, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, Egypt has consistently refused to support language welcoming or taking note of the Secretary-General's report. Somewhere, these steps have to be taken and the Security Council has waited a long time for those steps to be taken and for the kind of consensus we need in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations to give the Secretary-General the support he needs and to be more aggressive, commensurate with the gravity of this set of crimes. Again, if it were happening to our kids, we would not be having jurisdictional fights like this. We would not even think that it does not belong here, and yet — because it is somebody else's kids — we want to push this off somewhere else, where we know there will be a stalemate and gridlock and we will find ourselves in the same world in which we have been. And that is a world that is not working for these victims.

Fourthly, and this is related, several countries have again implied that the Security Council should stand down. I have to repeat, as a matter of logic — and maybe I am just not smart enough to follow all the jurisdictional hijinks that go on here at the United Nations — that in areas where peacekeepers are deployed, we, the Security Council, are responsible and try to take action when armies rape women and kids. We, the Security Council, see ourselves as responsible when non-State actors and militias rape women and kids, or men, for that matter. Again, we see ourselves as responsible when terrorists, who pose a grave threat to international peace and security, rape women and kids. How is it possible that we can argue that when our own peacekeepers, the people we have sent into the field, rape women and children, the Security Council does not have responsibility? How can we say that? This is our problem, our responsibility.

Fifthly, the Secretary-General described cases closed. I would like to thank him once again for his leadership and the personal responsibility he has taken in insisting that we move beyond getting reports from the field that say that cases are closed, to a world of transparent and thorough investigations. We do not know why those cases were closed. Was it because people waited a year to go back and actually try to talk to a victim? Was it because the evidence had disappeared? Was it because the peacekeepers who were alleged to have committed the crimes were deployed out? Knowing what we know, and having tried to unpack a little of what happens in those investigations, I would be very careful about equating closed cases with just and thorough investigations.

Finally, my last point reinforces something that the Secretary-General, and I believe everyone in the Chamber, has said, which is that the peacekeepers, as the President also said, are serving in some of the worst circumstances imaginable. When they go back to their home countries, those men and women will find that their families will barely know where they have been, in places that none of their families or neighbours will ever have visited, and that they will have no parades, no celebration of the service that they have given overseas. It is an awesome sacrifice that the troops, police and civilians who serve in these missions are making, and the risks are off the charts.

The United States is not a big troop- or police-contributor to United Nations peacekeeping, and that gives us a lot of humility when we discuss this subject in the Council. When I look around this table I have even more respect, whether I am looking at Egypt or China or Senegal or Uruguay, which send thousands of peacekeepers into these environments. We salute them. That is why during his time as President Mr. Obama has devoted more time and energy than any other American President to trying to support peacekeeping. It is so important, and so thankless. We should do more to honour that service, and I think that is a great point of convergence around this table. These people are saving thousands of lives — hundreds of thousands, probably — every day, if we think about what the situations would be like without them.

We must also be clear as to who the victims are as we talk about that is happening in the field. They are not the United Nations troops and police, most of whom, as everyone has said, with such distinction and bravery. They are the men, women and, far too often, the children who are the victims of rape, sexual abuse and other violations of human rights, committed by the very people who were sent to protect them. Those are the victims. We cannot forget that fact as we debate about what to do. We cannot forget who the victims are or how we would act if we actually knew those victims — if they were not numbers or abstractions but people we knew, people we were related to, people we cared about.

The President: The representative of Egypt has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have listened very attentively today to the Secretary-General's statement and to the words of our friend the representative of the United States. I would like to clarify some points, since evidently my statement did not come across clearly to the Security Council in the way I would have wished.

First, my delegation's insistence on respecting the mandate of the General Assembly in investigating matters related to sexual exploitation and abuse is based on our belief in the importance of tackling such cases and eliminating them, enhancing accountability and the partnerships between the Secretariat, the troop-contributing countries (TCCs) and other Member States. No body whose membership is by definition limited can impose commitments on TCCs without consulting them and enabling them to conduct investigations, specify accountability and punish the perpetrators of such crimes.

On the other hand, I am in full agreement with the other members of the Council that the majority of peacekeeping operations are doing heroic work and making enormous sacrifices, and that intensifies our objection to a policy of collective punishment of such forces, including proposals to return or repatriate entire contingents as a result of one mistake made by one person or member of a unit. Accountability must be limited to those actually involved in crimes, and no one else, or we open the door to arbitrary measures that are not subject to objective considerations. That is on top of the fact that there have seen numerous cases in which troops from outside the United Nations have participated in sexually abusive activities that have not been put before the Security Council to enable it to take the necessary punitive measures. That issue must be dealt with if we are serious about tackling such crimes in all their aspects and in a way that preserves human dignity everywhere, and not selectively.

With regard to the reference to Egypt's position on the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, our reservations were due to our rejection of the concept of field trials, because they are detrimental to considerations of sovereignty. That is the position of most of the TCCs. We asked for extra time for consultations, and we are prepared to look further into the best ways of finding appropriate and fair solutions.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Munir (Pakistan): We thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to express our views on a topic of great importance to all of us. We feel that the views of the troop-contributing countries (TCCs) can enrich this debate and lead to informed decisions.

We appreciate the Secretary-General's resolve in pursuing a zero-tolerance policy against sexual exploitation by peacekeepers. Pakistan, as a major TCC, fully supports zero tolerance towards sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers. Those deputed to defend must not be allowed to take advantage of the vulnerable with impunity. We take our responsibility as a TCC extremely seriously. We are fully conscious of the need for punitive actions against perpetrators of such heinous acts, which tarnish both the image of the United Nations as well as of the TCC itself, in addition to tainting the good work of peacekeeping in general. We have taken strict action against perpetrators in substantiated cases.

While we agree that one case is one too many and that there is no justification whatsoever for such callous behaviour, the report (A/70/729) of the Secretary-General itself identifies factors that may have led to an increase in such cases, including the hurried re-hatting of troops, the lack of predeployment training on standards of conduct, the excessive length of deployment of contingents, the living conditions of troops, including lack of welfare and communications facilities to stay in touch with their loved ones, and camps in proximity to, or not properly separated from, local populations, et cetera. Let me make a few points on the report and the process that we have and need to follow from here on.

There should be no ambiguity in the minds of anyone that as a TCC we are committed to getting rid of this scourge. We all pay lip service to trilateral cooperation. It is important to consult TCCs in the process of developing effective guidelines and mechanisms to stem this scourge. Collective punitive action is against the concept of justice and fair play and merits careful review. In principle, the Member States and its contingents cannot, and should not, be held responsible for the criminality of an individual. Distinctions between accusation and conviction are important and must be maintained. The focus of the narrative currently seems to be on allegations. Overly intrusive and prescriptive calls on Member States to review their criminal procedures and legislation should be avoided.

Recommendations related to the compensation of victims and the establishment of mechanisms for providing medical and legal assistance are appreciated. However, the establishment of a trust fund should be well thought through and implemented prudently. Preventive steps must be taken along with remedial measures, while addressing the issues of better planning and deployment, the rotation of troops and providing them with better facilities would have a positive impact.

Last but not least, we firmly believe that the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations of the General Assembly (C-34), which, incidentally, is compiling its report at this very moment, is the forum in which to discuss issues relating to the conduct and discipline of peacekeepers. Recommendations in the Secretary-General's report need to be discussed and analysed in the C-34 in a transparent and inclusive manner. The logic for that was very eloquently stated by the Permanent Representative of Egypt just now.

Our troops are deployed in dangerous and violent situations, shedding their blood for the common cause of promoting international peace and security. Their contributions should not be sullied by the acts of a few. Any action by this body that could lead to a generic blaming of peacekeepers is bound to negatively impact the morale of the troops on the ground. That, we feel, should be avoided.

Let me, in conclusion, reiterate our commitment with regard to the fact that sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers cannot, and should not, be allowed to continue.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Akbaruddin (India): I thank you, Mr. President, for providing us an opportunity to express our views on what are extraordinarily disturbing issues.

We share the Secretary-General's distress, so passionately articulated in his oral briefing and in his report (A/70/729) to the General Assembly. I will be very brief. As a country that has provided peacekeepers to 48 of the 68 United Nations peacekeeping operations, and as a country with the largest cumulative number of troops being contributed to the United Nations, we are deeply disturbed by this increasing phenomenon. We have contributed our troops because we see peacekeeping as the shining example of the international community's commitment to collective security. Therefore, to us, it is very worrisome that the protectors are now being widely perceived as predators.

We in India have a policy of zero tolerance. In our approach, there is no hesitation or reluctance. It would be immoral if it had been so. Aberrations have taken place in United Nations peacekeeping, and they are abhorrent and repugnant. That is particularly so given the confidence that has been reposed in the Blue Helmets and in the Organization.

The malaise that we are confronting is not one merely of enforcing compliance, but of setting norms. What we are venturing into is putting emphasis on values of universal application. The approach and the cures that have been mentioned require a format that is more broad-based and more inclusive than merely addressing the issue as a matter of peace and security. What we need to do is to send a message that we are together in addressing it, not a feeling that we are addressing it as a command issue. Regaining our collective reputation as exemplars of universal idealism is too important a matter to be confined to a few. It requires the participation of all, not the least the troop-contributing countries. That may be difficult. And it may be frustrating and slow. But as the medium is the message, then the message we ought to convey can be only through a more inclusive format. Anything less will, in our view, not convey the same message.

We will continue to support the effort to implement the United Nations zero-tolerance policy. We will continue to work with other Member States in this endeavour, and the Secretary-General will have our full cooperation in the effort.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda.

Mr. Sana (Rwanda): It is with conviction that I share with the Security Council Rwanda's stance and commitment to ending sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations peacekeeping operations. I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing. We take note of the recommendations contained in his report (A/70/729) to the General Assembly on the sexual exploitation and abuse. We hope that all Member States, in particular all troop-contributing countries, will have an opportunity to share their views in that regard. We also take this opportunity to commend the Secretary-General for his efforts to combat sexual exploitation and abuse.

Rwanda is more than committed to ensuring that as we deliver on our responsibility to protect we protect with the utmost integrity the lives of those we have been tasked to safeguard. The Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians, an outcome of the International Conference on the Protection of Civilians held last year, has touched on this important issue by advancing the steps that must be taken to achieve a zero-tolerance policy, while at the same time underscoring the need to report on all human rights abuses. We believe that all sexual violence and abuse is unacceptable. Our military and judicial policies are a strong testament of our commitment to ending such abhorrent actions. Let me be clear: even one case, in our view, is unacceptable, and should not be tolerated. The protectors should not be perpetrators. There is no justification whatsoever for cases of sexual exploitation and abuse. Any allegation should be reported and investigated, with legal action taken against the alleged perpetrators.

Combating sexual exploitation and abuse begins long before peacekeepers arrive in the mission area. Discipline and a code of conduct anchored in our culture and within national jurisdictions is paramount in preventing, fighting and eradicating sexual exploitation and abuse, which in the end undermines the credibility of peacekeepers, who are doing a tremendous job in different missions, including making the ultimate sacrifice.

My country has an absolute-zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse. We ensure that our troops and police receive thorough training, which covers sexual exploitation and abuse, for which we also use United Nations manuals as additional reference. In terms of our judiciary, the Rwandan penal code punishes all those found guilty of the crime, including peacekeepers operating internationally. My Government has also committed to combating sexual exploitation and abuse, including by deploying a legal adviser and an investigator in each battalion of our contingents deployed in United Nations peacekeeping missions since 2011.

In the case of Rwanda, as mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General, three inquiries have been undertaken into inappropriate relationships between adult women and Rwandan police officers formerly serving in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. That allegation represents a serious violation of our Government policies. Investigations have been ongoing and strong administrative measures have been taken as we await their completion.

As Member States, we must continue to report, prosecute and punish those who have been convicted of taking advantage of the most vulnerable, the women and children entangled in today's conflicts. The victims are our mothers, our sisters and our daughters. This effort should also apply to those operating as non-United Nations personnel working under a Security Council mandate. It should also be expected that national and regional entities deployed outside the United Nations mandate are held to the same standard as United Nations personnel, including independent investigations with the outcomes brought to the attention of the appropriate bodies for action. Transparency, objectivity and accountability should characterize the Secretariat's work in addressing this issue.

In addition to the obligation incumbent upon the troop-contributing countries, there is a great need for regular interaction between the Secretariat and TCCs when it comes to investigations. Therefore, updates from both sides are necessary before reports are released. Most often, the Secretariat does not consult Member States. Yet there are cases that have been investigated and legal action taken, but are not included in the reports. At the same time, non-policy violations should not divert attention from, or dilute responsibility for, the numerous unresolved cases of rape and child abuse by peacekeeping forces. We therefore call upon the United Nations and troop-contributing countries to remain focused on accountability for this heinous crime.

In conclusion, let me say that the time to take immediate and effective action is now. We must all, individually and collectively, do what is in our means to enforce the zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation and abuse, while also working towards eradicating the existence of sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations. As we continue to work within our capacities to strengthen all measures related to sexual exploitation and abuse, we must also hold other stakeholders accountable. By working collectively and with transparency we can eliminate past wrongdoing and refocus our efforts on upholding the infinite act of great courage undertaken by our peacekeepers time and time again.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.